

JACK'S INSECTS


EDMUND SELOUS



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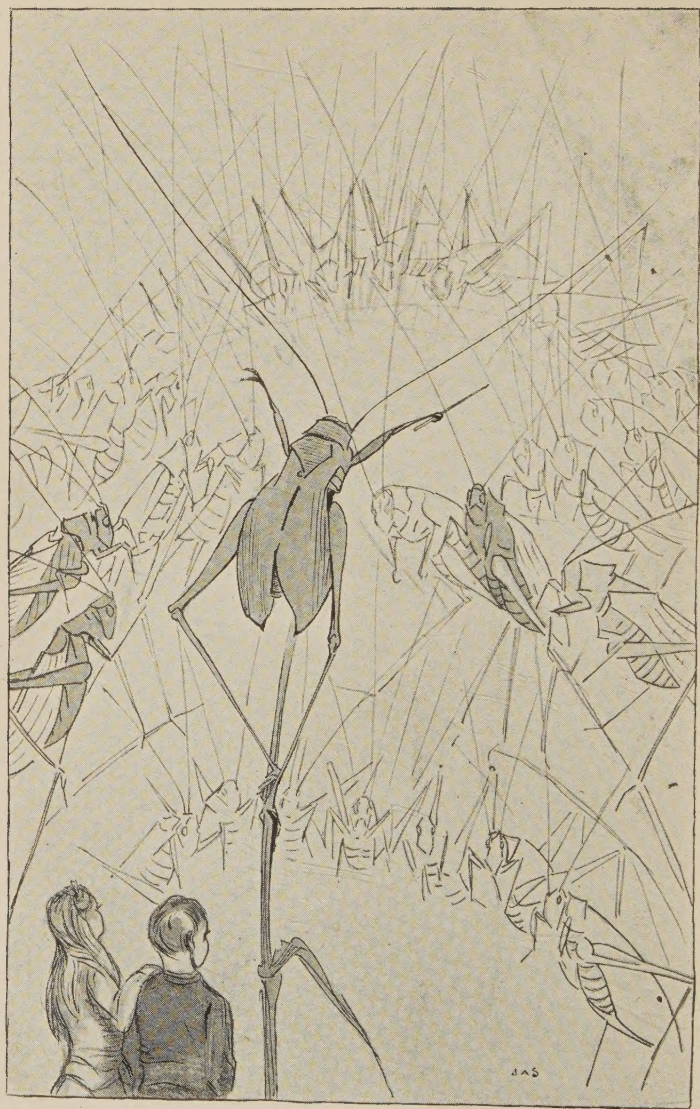
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JACK'S INSECTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TOMMY SMITH'S ANIMALS

TOMMY SMITH'S OTHER ANIMALS



THE GREAT KATYDID CONCERT

JACK'S INSECTS

BY

EDMUND SELOUS

AUTHOR OF "TOMMY SMITH'S ANIMALS"

"TOMMY SMITH'S OTHER ANIMALS" ETC.



J. A. S.

WITH FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY

J. A. SHEPHERD

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO
MY MOTHER

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JACK'S INSECTS

CHAPTER I

INSIDE THE BOOK

IT was getting quite near bed-time, and Jack and Maggie were both tired, for they had been up late the night before, because it was Jack's birthday. On that day Jack had only had time to look at the cover and illustrations of the new book on natural history which his mother had given him, and, even now, several important things, such as meals, walks and games, had prevented his reading it, in a proper way, till the evening; so that he was still in the first chapter, and so sleepy that, even if there had been time, he would not have been able to get to the end of it. But nothing would have made either him or his sister Maggie want to go to bed before the hands of the clock had got to the right place, and the proper remarks about it had been made.

This book was mostly about insects, because, as the rest of the animal kingdom had been exhausted, upon previous birthdays, only insects and spiders, and things of that sort, were left. This was one very good reason for having them now, for a new book ought to be about something new, but a still better one, perhaps, was that, just at that time, Jack was more interested in insects than in anything else, so that he had bought a butterfly-net, and was trying to make Maggie interested in them too.

JACK'S INSECTS

"I think you might be, Maggie," he said, "because they *are* very interesting, you know, insects are."

"I am interested in butterflies," said Maggie, looking at a picture of some, which Jack had come to—"that is, they're pretty, but I don't like killing them."

"But that's entomology, you know, Maggie," said Jack.



It was getting quite near bed-time

"*I* think it's cruelty," said Maggie sententiously—she was a little older than her brother, but not so scientific.

"No ; but it isn't, Maggie, really—not in that way," Jack answered. "Just to throw one's cap at them, and kill them and leave them there, without making any use of them, that's cruelty, of course ; but to catch them in a net, properly, and put them in a killing-bottle without hurting them—I mean without rubbing their wings—and then pin them out on cork, with their Latin

names underneath them, that isn't, because—because it's important, you know."

"Important!" cried Maggie. "Oh, Jack, how can it be?"

"But it is, Maggie, really, if you understood it," explained Jack, "because—because it's entomology, you see, and *that's* important."

"Is it? Oh, well, I don't see why, and I don't like it."

"But it isn't only that, you know," Jack went on. "There's setting them, and arranging them by families, and finding out about their habits, in books—in a book like this, you know—all insects, I mean, of course—entomology's about all insects, you know."

"I should never like all insects," said Maggie.

"But you would like knowing about them," persisted Jack. "Entomology's"—he had learnt the word in the last week and thought a great deal of it—"tremendously interesting, really. I wish you'd read the book with me, Maggie. I'm sure if you were once to get into it——"

"I wish one *could* get into books," said Maggie, yawning.

"Why, but so you can," said Jack, yawning too (for it makes one yawn to see someone else doing it). "Of course you can. I'm just getting into this one."

"Yes, but I don't mean in that way," Maggie explained. "I mean if you could get inside them, as you go inside a room, and meet the people that there are in them, and find that they were real, and begin to talk to them, and—and go through them—through the book, you know—in that way."

"Oh, Maggie," said Jack, "*what* an idea! But it would be nice, though."

"*Wouldn't* it!" said Maggie. "It would make reading things ever so much more interesting—even one's

school books. Fancy if, instead of just reading in one's history, 'Richard the Third, surnamed Crook-back,' you could get inside the book and meet him, and see if he had a crooked back or not—because, you know, it says somewhere else that he hadn't really, but was only short and had one shoulder higher than the other, and then, after saying how he killed his nephews in the Tower, it says that it's doubtful if he really did kill them. But if one were to meet him in the book, one could ask him and find out, and——"

"No, but you couldn't, Maggie," said Jack; "at least not to be sure, because first he mightn't say, or not say right, and, besides, if you met him in the book he'd have to be what he was there, and so he'd just keep changing, and you'd never really know."

"Oh dear," said Maggie, "I never thought of that; but that would make it all the more fun, you know, because they'd be contradicting one another, and then, of course, they'd have to fight, because they did in those times. Fancy one Richard the Third who was only short, with one high shoulder, challenging another because *he* was a real hunchback."

"Oh, Maggie," said Jack, "what nonsense you're talking!"

"And then," continued Maggie, "there'd be a Shakespeare's Richard the Third, they always mention him as something different, and he'd have to fight, too, of course, and I believe *he'd* win; and besides they'd all want to kill each other so that only one of them should come to the crown, because they couldn't all reign. How could they?"

"But they all do in the books," said Jack, "so they'd all have to. There couldn't be a king, you know, that didn't come to the crown."

"Oh, well, that would make it all the more curious," said Maggie, "and it would be the same with all the other ones—or nearly all of them—and the great people too. There'd be several Cromwells and Straffords, and a Charles the First who was right, and wrong. Then there'd be a good Henry the Eighth and a bad one, and one that wasn't quite good or quite bad—I believe there'd be a lot of Henry the Eighths—and two Mary Queen of Scots, anyhow, one that killed Darnley and was wicked and another that didn't, and wasn't; and that would make two Queen Elizabeths, too, you know, because——"

"Because it wouldn't be fair if there weren't," said Jack. "It would be two to one, you know, only she'd behead them both."

"No, I don't mean that," said Maggie; "but there'd be a Queen Elizabeth who *was* justified in beheading her and a Queen Elizabeth who wasn't justified—because there must be one for each kind of Mary, you know, and they'd all be arguing and disputing."

"I wish I could get into *this* book in that way," said Jack, "only we never could, really, because we're too big; and it wouldn't really be nice either, because there'd be no real countries or places, but only paper with their names written on it."

"Oh no, Jack," said Maggie eagerly, "it wouldn't be like that. Why should it? You might just as well say that the people—or the insects, if it was this one—would be only names written down. But if *they* were real why shouldn't the places be too—and as for being too big, why, how could we get into the book at all without getting small first?"

"Of course if we *did* get small——" said Jack.

"We'd have to, you know," said Maggie, "so that

settles it. And then as the things that were written about had got real, going from one page or chapter to another would be like going from one place or country to another place or country, and, of course, as they would be much nearer together, it would be natural to get there ever so much quicker, and without steamboats or anything. It would be absurd to have a steamboat to go to America or India in, when Europe was only a few lines or paragraphs away from them. We could walk there easily."

"Of course we could," said Jack. "That would be the natural way then."

"And then," continued Maggie, "if we were small enough to talk to one person or animal in a book, it would be just as natural to get a little smaller, or larger, so as to talk to another, you know, because they're of different sizes. So then we should always be the right size whoever we were talking to—and an animal, or even an insect, *can* talk in a book, so that would make it natural too."

"It *would* be fun," said Jack.

"Yes," said Maggie, "and I don't see any reason at all why it shouldn't happen."

"More do I, now," said Jack, and then they neither of them said anything for a little while.

"Oh, Maggie," cried Jack, all of a sudden, and in a half-surprised tone of voice, "I believe I *am* getting inside the book."

"*Are* you?" said Maggie.

"Yes, I am, really," Jack answered; "do come too."

"I don't know if I can," said Maggie. "It's because your head's on the book, I think."

"Your head's quite near it too," said Jack, "and it's

touching mine. And it was you who thought of it, you know, Maggie, so you might come.”

“I’d much rather go into my history book,” said Maggie. “It would be much nicer talking to historical characters than to insects.”

“Not if you liked entomology better than you did history,” said Jack—“and besides, that book’s not here. Oh!”

“What?” said Maggie, and directly afterwards she called out, “Oh, Jack, I believe I *am* going into it.”

“Then we both are,” said Jack, “because—oh!”

“Oh, what *was* that?” said Maggie. “Something flashed.”

“A butterfly, I think it was,” said Jack, “because it flashed blue, and——”

“Oh! oh!! oh!!!” cried Maggie. “What flashes and what a wonderful colour! Oh, it can’t be a butterfly.”

“It is,” said Jack. “I’m sure it is. It’s the Great Morpho Butterfly that I’d just got to, and you can see the flashes *he* makes a quarter of a mile off. Oh, there! You saw him then, Maggie, didn’t you?”

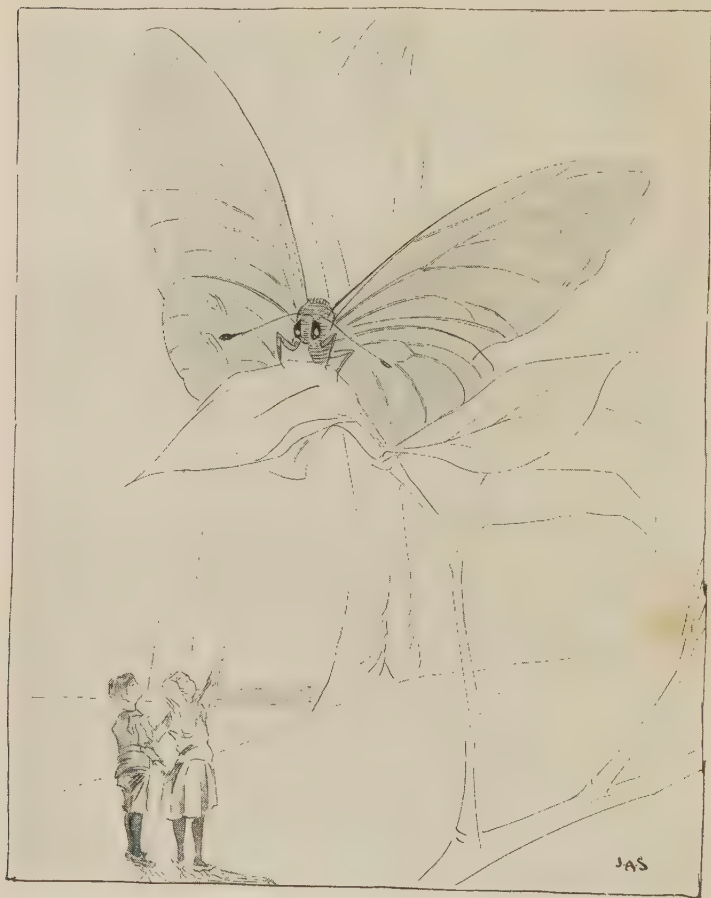
“Yes, *that* was a butterfly, I think,” said Maggie.

“He may come nearer soon,” said Jack. “Then this must be a forest in South America, because that’s where the Great Morpho—oh, Maggie, what trees! Oh, and there are more butterflies. What beauties! Oh, Maggie, do look! Oh, there! That was the Great Morpho again. He’s coming nearer. I believe he’s going to settle. By *Jingo*, he *is* settling. How beautiful! and”—this was in a tone of deep disappointment—“I haven’t brought my net or my killing-bottle.”

“I’m glad of that,” said Maggie. “Oh, Jack, how can you want to kill such beautiful creatures?”

There were flashes all about now, and everything

was getting plainer. They were certainly in a forest,



"By *Jingo*, he *is* settling"

and it was a tropical forest too—that was quite clear,

because of the trees and the butterflies—so as there were no tropical forests at all near them, except in the book, there could be no doubt whatever that somehow they had got into the book, because, as Maggie said, there was no other way of explaining it.

Perhaps that was why things didn't seem quite so strange as one might have expected, because the trees were just like they were drawn in the pictures—only quite real—so that it would only be waste of time to describe them, because everybody knows what a tropical forest in a picture looks like. But as for the butterflies, it seemed to both Jack and Maggie that ones in a book never could have been so bright or so beautiful, but, of course, they must have been, because there they were. They wondered, too, for a little, how they could be flying about, but soon they found out that it was the descriptions more than the pictures that they were like, and it was the same, before long, with everything, and then they began to forget that they were in a book at all. It was *quite* real, even when one of the butterflies—it was the one that Jack had said was the Great Morpho Butterfly, the most beautiful, or, at any rate, the most splendid one of all—began to say something—in English, too—in fact, to make an answer to Maggie's last remark.

CHAPTER II

JACK PROMISES THE GREAT MORPHO BUTTERFLY

"THAT," said the Great Morpho Butterfly, "is a sentiment that I entirely approve of."

"Do you mean what I said about killing beautiful creatures?" said Maggie, who found herself talking to a butterfly quite naturally.

"Of course I do," the Butterfly answered. "So you want to kill me, do you, you little insignificant wretch?"—this last, of course, was to Jack, who felt obliged to say he didn't.

"You couldn't if you did," said the Morpho Butterfly. "Why, I should be over the tops of the trees in a moment, and I should just like to know how you'd catch me. Even if you could you couldn't do it in the way you would like to—I mean in a butterfly-net—because I'm so large that I wouldn't go into it."

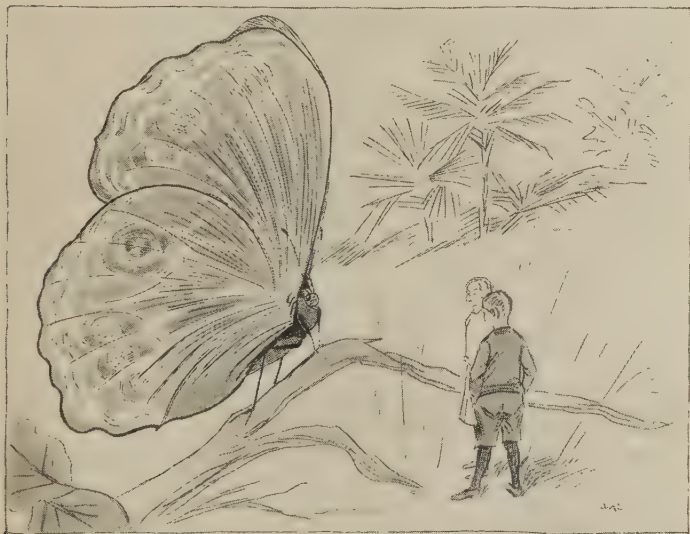
"Oh, I think you would," said Jack, who remembered the butterfly-net he had left in the hall, but forgot that he was much too small now to lift it. "I think I could catch you in it if——"

"I should like to see you try to," said the Great Morpho Butterfly. "Why, how big do you suppose yourself to be? I am seven inches across the wings, which is more than you are, I think, across anything, so unless you could carry a net that was more than big enough to catch yourself in—— Kill me, indeed!"

Jack saw then what a mistake he had been making, and that it would be impossible for him now to be

an entomologist any longer — for as for entomology without killing he had never thought of such a thing. So he said, "No, I think you're right, Mr Butterfly. "I don't think I should be able to catch you."

"And he doesn't want to, now, I'm sure," said



"So you want to kill me, do you, you little insignificant wretch?"

Maggie, wishing to make the conversation a little pleasanter.

"Only because he can't," said the Butterfly; "that's why. If anything were to make him the right size, he'd want to, again, directly."

"Oh, I don't think he would," Maggie said soothingly.

The Butterfly didn't look at all convinced. "And

why, pray, should you ever want to kill me?" he said, turning to Jack again. "I don't mean now that you can't, but supposing that you could, you know. It's him that I'm asking," he added, somewhat severely, as Maggie was going to say something, "and I should prefer him to speak for himself. Well?"

"Please, Mr Butterfly," said Jack—he was rather nervous, but felt it was a good reason—"it's because you're so handsome."

"You allude, I presume, to the exquisite azure hue of my wings, shot as they are with iridescent opaline gleams," said the Morpho Butterfly, "and to the marvellous manner in which they flash in the sunlight. Is that it?"

"Er—yes, I think so, Mr Butterfly," said Jack; "at least, about the flashing" (for that was all he understood).

"And have you ever reflected," the Morpho Butterfly continued, "that these *extraordinarily* beautiful wings of mine require the sunlight to flash in, and that if you shut them up in a dark place where there is no sun, and not even a sky—which is what you would do, I know—they can't flash, at least not properly, and so are not nearly so handsome. Has *that* ever occurred to you?"

"No, I don't think so," said Jack.

"You *would* keep me in the dark if you could, wouldn't you?" said the Butterfly.

"Yes, but that's because your colours fade in the light, you know," said Jack, who was quite up in such subjects.

"They might just as well fade, I'm sure," the Butterfly answered, "as be in a dingy room or museum, or anywhere where they were not *intended* to be. People

who wish to admire my beauty should come and see it where it is most worth seeing, and, when they have seen it, they should leave it for other people to see when they come—not steal it and take it away with them, and put it somewhere where it doesn't look beautiful any more, and so is only wasted. To take a butterfly that was alive and flying about, out of its woods and fields, and kill it, and put it into a box, or a cabinet, is just the same as to take pictures off the walls of rooms, and hang them on trees and hedges. They would be out of place, and we are out of place, and we can neither of us look the better for it."

"But you know, Mr Butterfly," said Jack, "that everybody can't come out into the forests, where you live, to see you. Only a few can do that, you know, but when you are in a museum a great many people can come there, so that they know something about you, and can read your Latin name, and——"

"Good gracious!" said the Morpho Butterfly, in an irritated tone of voice, "if those are the people I'm killed for, I think I had much better be left alive. Everybody really capable of appreciating me would much rather think of me alive and flying about than see me dead, with a pin through my body. Oh dear! people who can enjoy seeing butterflies in that way must be silly and cruel both. That, at any rate, is my opinion. I may be prejudiced, but if I am, it's natural."

Even Jack couldn't help admitting that for a butterfly to be prejudiced on such a subject *was* natural, and Maggie said, with a great deal of feeling, "I quite agree with you, Mr Butterfly."

"Any right-minded person must, I think," said the Great Morpho. "Now look here," he continued, with

another flash of his wings, which made Jack, whom he had turned towards, jump, "as for my Latin name, anybody who wants to know that can find it in a book, and much good may it do him, and if anybody really does care about seeing me with a pin stuck through me, and not able to fly, well, there are enough museums with specimens of me in that condition to satisfy their barbarous tastes ; but if people keep on killing me and putting me into drawers and boxes, mark my words"—here the Butterfly's voice became very impressive, and his antennæ quivered with emotion—"there will soon be no more Great Morpho Butterflies to stick pins through. We will all be in boxes and cabinets."

"Oh no, Mr Butterfly, please don't say that," said Maggie, for to her it seemed dreadful.

"I do say it," said the Morpho Butterfly. "We shall have disappeared as a living species, and therefore the world will have to get on without us."

"Oh no, please, Mr Morpho," said Jack, who had never thought of such a thing as that.

"It will not be my fault," said the Morpho Butterfly, "so it's no use appealing to me. On the contrary, I have always done my best to avert the calamity, and my efforts have been to some extent successful. But the evil is not confined to our species. I am a strong and high flier, and it's not so easy to stick a pin through me. Others, however, are as inferior to myself in strength and agility as they are in appearance. Look about you !"

This was said in a very brisk tone of voice—it had been quite solemn just before—and in an instant the forest and the whole air, and everything, was quite full of butterflies, every one of which seemed to be the most beautiful kind in the world as long as you were looking

at it, and not at another kind. Some, amongst which was the Great Morpho itself, were flying high up above the tops of the great forest trees, as quickly as swallows, almost, whilst others flapped lazily along in the sunny glades, so slowly that it seemed as if they paused at every flap, to show their beautiful wings more plainly. Some of these were of rich gold or orange, some of orange and red, others of blue, purple, scarlet or green, or of soft golden green mixed with deep velvety black. In others, again, all these colours and many more were mingled in various patterns, and there were some that, at first, seemed to have no colours at all, and then, all at once, shot out into many-coloured flashes, like diamonds. There were butterflies who looked of quite a plain white, at one moment, and, the next, glistened like the most beautiful white satin, and others whose wings were quite clear and transparent, like glass, except for one spot in the centre of each of the larger pair, which was of a soft violet shade, like the petal of some very pretty flower. As this was the only part that could be seen, it looked as if a twin pair of flowers—say violets—and not a butterfly at all, were fluttering about in the air.

Besides all these beautiful tropical butterflies, Jack saw some that he recognised at once, such as the peacock and red admiral, and another that he had not seen, and never could see, now, in England, but had often read about, and seen plates of, that was like a flake of red copper, and shone most beautifully as it fluttered along. Another very handsome one, whose under wings ended in a long point, he felt sure was the swallow-tail butterfly, though he had never seen that either. He knew that it was very rare, and likely soon to become extinct in England, but he had never thought, before, of why it was so rare, or felt sorry that he and other people

could not see it flying about, as once they used to—only that he could not catch it and kill it, and so make it rarer still. Many of these gorgeous tropical butterflies, too, had wings of much the same shape, whilst in others they first became narrow, at the ends, and then broadened out into a round or oval shape, like a battledore or tennis-racket, so that one might call them racket-tailed, rather than swallow-tailed butterflies. There was often a beautiful, richly-coloured spot where the ends broadened out, and some of these butterflies were amongst the handsomest of all of them.

There was a river running through the forest now—though neither Maggie nor Jack had noticed it before—and such streams of bright-coloured butterflies were flying backwards and forwards over it that it looked as if two living rainbows were passing one another in the air. Some of these butterflies, as they flew across, settled on the shores, or on sandbanks that lay in the water, and every now and then they would all fly up together, in a many-coloured cloud, whilst, higher in the air, amidst the glades and alleys of the forests, hundreds of other ones whirled and twirled about as if they were having a dance.

“There!” said the Great Morpho Butterfly, “that’s what it’s like with us butterflies before people begin to catch us and put us into killing-bottles and stick pins through us and sell us for money, which is what they call taking a scientific interest in us; but after that has been done for some time, the forests and meadows, and in fact the country generally, doesn’t look quite the same as it used to, and as time goes on it gets worse.”

As he said this, the beautiful lights and colours of all the butterflies they had been looking at began to die out of the air, and so quickly, too, that where there had



Streams of bright-coloured butterflies were flying backwards and forwards

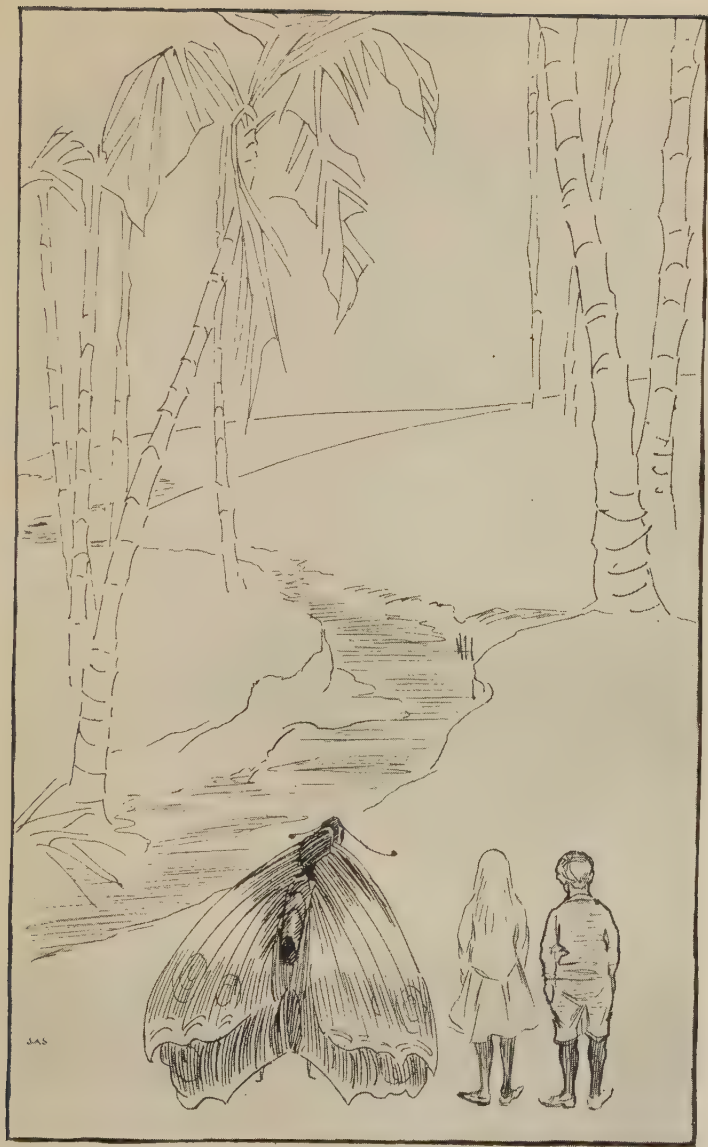
been more than a thousand before, very soon there were less than a hundred, and before long there were only one or two to be seen, here and there, and then, all of a sudden, there were the great forests and rivers, with meadows and hills and other more familiar landscapes, but without any butterflies at all. It was quite wonderful how sad and wretched it seemed, after what they had just been seeing, even though the sun was still shining and the sky as blue as could be.

"You can't bring them back again when they're once gone like that," said the Morpho Butterfly to Maggie, who was looking very melancholy. "When an individual dies other individuals are left to take his place, but if a species dies it can never come to life again, because there are no more individuals *of* that species. They are all dead, and so the species is extinct."

"Oh, but do bring them back again now," said Maggie, who couldn't believe that so many beautiful butterflies were gone for ever. "Can't you, Mr Butterfly?"

"However," continued the Morpho Butterfly, without answering this question, "you've got something to console you. After all, they're not really gone." As he said this, the forest, and everything else, seemed to change into one long, long gallery of a very enormous museum, with stuffed animals running (only not in the right way) all down the centre, and long, long rows of dark-looking things on each side.

"They're not desks," said the Butterfly, who saw that both Jack and Maggie looked puzzled (for they lived in the country), "but glass cases on legs, with covers over them, and that's where we all are now. After we're dead, you know, we're kept in the dark, as you say, because the light hurts us then—it never used to before—but when anybody takes off any of the covers"



All of a sudden, there were the great forests and rivers . . . but without
any butterflies at all

(for there were people walking up and down the long gallery) "you'll be able to see some of us again. They will, you know, as soon as they want to."

Somehow it seemed as if very few of the people in the great long gallery—and there were not so very many—did want to look at the dead butterflies in the cases, for it was only just now and then that somebody would lift up one of the covers, and then they put it back again almost directly. What they did look at was the big stuffed animals in the centre, and even that was in a very uninterested sort of way—the kind of way in which one goes through a photographic album. When the covers were lifted up, Jack and Maggie just saw something, for a moment, that looked like a piece of bright patchwork, or part of a harlequin's dress, and then it was gone again. They could neither of them have believed that the butterflies, which had been so full of beauty when flying about in their natural surroundings, could have lost so much of it, and looked so very inferior, when pinned in rows inside boxes.

"Because, you see," said the Great Morpho Butterfly, just as if he had understood what they were thinking, "a great part of our beauty was our life and our motion, and it was that, and that only, that made us interesting, so that, if you take *that* away, you can't expect us to look at all the same. Then, of course, if you take away the sun and the air and the trees and flowers, as well, and put us into absurd little boxes in dark, dingy rooms, that makes it ever so much worse. We can't be expected to flash much in places like that. I doubt if even I could, effectively, under such very unfavourable conditions. As for seeing me a quarter of a mile off, as you can when I'm alive in my own forests,

sometimes, well, you can try if you like—in London or any other large city.”

“Oh no, Mr Morpho,” said Jack, “that wouldn’t do, because I shouldn’t be able to see you, because of the walls and houses.”

“Exactly,” said the Morpho Butterfly. “Walls and houses are not the right things for us. We are not fitted for such surroundings, and, depend upon it, if people really want to see us—if they really do care about it—they will come to pay us visits in our own homes, and, instead of killing us, as a reward for the pleasure we have given them, will leave us alive there, to give the same pleasure to others when they come.”

“But——” said Jack.

“Of course, if you really want to exterminate us——” said the Great Morpho Butterfly.

“Oh no, Mr Butterfly, I’m sure he doesn’t,” said Maggie. “He won’t collect butterflies any more.”

“But it wouldn’t be exterminating you, just to get a few specimens,” said Jack.

“Oh yes, it would,” said the Morpho Butterfly. “Most of the animals that have been exterminated have been exterminated in that very way.”

This puzzled Jack a good deal, at first, because he thought it must be by killing a great many of them that animals were exterminated, and not only a few. But when he had turned it over in his mind, a little, it seemed to him that what the Morpho Butterfly really meant was that if numbers of people *all* took a few specimens, and kept on doing it, over and over again, that *that* would make a great many (and even a very great many), until, at last, there would be no more specimens to take. This seemed to him more and more likely to be the right meaning, and when the

Morpho Butterfly, who had been quivering his wings and antennæ ever since he had last spoken, said suddenly, "As for specimens, it's a word I've no patience with, and the fewer, the worse, in my opinion," he felt quite sure of it.

"You mean the more, not the fewer, don't you, Mr Butterfly?" said Maggie.

"I mean what it really is, and not what people only say it is," the Morpho Butterfly answered. "If a man, or a boy" (here he looked full at Jack, and gave quite a fierce flash with his wings), "were to want one of us only, or two, or even three—some precise number—I might have confidence in him, even though I did hate him" (here there was another flash), "but, in my experience, the man who goes on killing and killing, and *never* leaves off, is the man who wants just a few specimens. Oh, don't talk to me in that way, *please*."

"But, Mr Morpho Butterfly," said Jack, "isn't collecting insects entomology?"

"No," said the Morpho Butterfly, in a very convinced tone of voice, "it is not."

This was the most astonishing answer that Jack had ever heard made to any question. He had spoken to his parents on the subject, and to some other grown-up people too—even to some of his schoolmasters—and they had all seemed to think that, to be an entomologist, one had only to collect insects and stick pins through them—how could they all be mistaken? It was clear that the Morpho Butterfly was wrong, and the proper thing to do—though Jack was afraid he wouldn't find it easy—was to undeceive him. "Please, Mr Mor——" he began.

"What I mean," said the Morpho Butterfly, interrupting him, "is that it is not *real* entomology. *Real*

entomology is finding out about the habits of insects, and that you can only do by watching them whilst they are alive, because after they are dead, you know, they haven't any habits. You admit *that*, I suppose?"

Of course Jack had to admit that, and the Butterfly continued, "Very well, then, if you keep killing insects—of course I mean respectable insects, not fleas and so forth——"

"Yes, of course, Mr Butterfly," said Maggie cheerfully—for this settled a difficulty which had occurred to her more than once.

"Why, then, as I say," the Morpho Butterfly continued, "they get fewer and fewer until at last there are no more of them left, and then one can know nothing of them."

"Oh yes, in books, Mr Butterfly," said Jack.

"But one can find out nothing new about them," said the Butterfly, "and the great pleasure of real entomology is doing that. Even if one does know the habits of a really interesting insect, it is much better to see them than only to read about them, especially as what one reads in books is generally wrong."

"Oh no, Mr Morpho," said Jack—he felt sure that this must be a mistake—"not in good books."

"Good or bad," said the Morpho Butterfly, "they generally turn out to be wrong—or at any rate not quite right—every ten years or so, and sometimes a great deal sooner. Perhaps a very good one may go on being right for a year or two longer, but such cases are exceptional."

"I know it's like that with the history books," said Maggie, "all except the dates of the kings and queens."

"They're always changing, themselves, at any rate," said the Great Morpho Butterfly (just as if *he* had read

history). "You see," he continued, "the covers of books wear out, so that they have to be rebound, and it's just the same with their insides. If you don't believe me, you can ask the bookworm, on whose authority I have it. He lives inside all kinds of books, you know, and he tells me the changes he has witnessed in every department are quite remarkable. Nothing, in his opinion, can ever be settled—that's his philosophy."

This was quite a new idea to Jack, who had always thought that there was nothing in the world quite so certain as what one reads in a good natural history book.

"So you see," went on the Great Morpho Butterfly, "if the sham entomologists—for that's what *I* call them—keep killing all the beautiful and interesting insects that there are, it will get more and more difficult for the real entomologists to study their habits, or for anybody to see their beauty. What the fields and the forests look like when there are no butterflies flying about in them, you have seen already, so you can judge for yourselves what it will be when there is not even a bright beetle or pretty grasshopper to be seen."

"Except in horrid drawers and boxes," said Maggie, who was altogether of the Butterfly's opinion.

"Exactly," said the Morpho Butterfly. "Mark my words" (it was the second time he had used this expression and again he spoke very solemnly), "if things go on as they are now, nobody who lives in the country will be able to see a butterfly except by going to London."

"Oh, I shouldn't like that, Mr Butterfly," said Jack—for what, he thought, would be the use of a butterfly-net under such circumstances.

"Then don't help to produce such a shocking state

of things," said the Morpho Butterfly. "That's what you have been doing, you know, because you've been collecting butterflies."

"Oh, but he won't any more," said Maggie; "I'm sure he won't."

"I haven't got very many," Jack said. "I've hardly begun yet—properly."

"There could be no better time for leaving off," said the Great Morpho Butterfly.

"But I haven't filled a single——" Jack was beginning.

"Let me tell you," said the Morpho Butterfly, "that, whenever you have killed any insect and stuck a pin through it, you have been a sham entomologist. But you can't do that here, you know, and even only wanting to will make you a *very* unpopular character. Now the question is if you would like to be a real entomologist, because if you would there's some use in your staying here, but if you wouldn't there isn't."

But Jack did want to stay, because he thought it was interesting, and he certainly wanted to be a real entomologist. Of that he was quite sure, and so, of course, he said that he did.

"In that case," said the Morpho Butterfly, "and if you are prepared to go through the book in a right spirit—which will be very different from the spirit in which you began it—perhaps you will come out a real entomologist, and not merely a sham one, as you are now, at the end of it."

"I'm not a sham entomologist," said Jack indignantly, for, though he was not quite so sure, now, as to what real entomology was, he didn't like being spoken of in that way.

"Then you agree to the conditions?" said the Morpho Butterfly.

Jack hesitated a little, but he thought that, as he couldn't collect butterflies now, he might just as well agree not to collect them, and so at last he said, "Yes."

"You must promise, you know," said the Morpho Butterfly—"never to collect, which, of course, means never to kill us any more. And by 'us' I mean insects."

"But if I *can't* collect you——" said Jack—for after all, he would rather not have promised.

"That doesn't matter," said the Morpho Butterfly. "You might try to, although you can't, and to have someone trying to collect one all day long would be almost as bad as being really collected—a most insufferable state of things!"

"Oh, all right, then, I promise not to—or to try either," said Jack—and then he repeated the words.

"Very well," said the Great Morpho Butterfly, "then from now we commence a new chapter."

And as he said that, in a moment the long gallery, with the desks, and the stuffed animals and the sauntering people who looked so very little interested, had all disappeared, and there were the butterflies back again, looking more beautiful than ever.

CHAPTER III

A QUITE UNINTENTIONAL INSULT

"I'M glad you've promised, Jack," said Maggie. "I never thought it was right to kill butterflies, and now you see it isn't."

"I wish he'd been in my collection before I promised," said Jack. "He's the finest butterfly in the world, you know."

"I beg your pardon," said a voice close beside them. "To whom did you apply that remark?"

"Why, to you, of course," said Jack, as he looked round, expecting to see the Great Morpho Butterfly again. "Only I didn't think you were listening, Mr Mor—— Oh!" he exclaimed, stopping all of a sudden, for there, instead of the Morpho, sat a quite different and very splendid butterfly that neither he nor Maggie had seen before. Now that they did see it, all of a sudden, they thought it just a little handsomer than the Great Morpho Butterfly itself, but that was only because it was new. This new butterfly was as large, or almost as large, as the other, but his wings were shaped quite differently. They were long and pointed, and the lower ones, especially, ended in two long thin tails, which looked very graceful, and made him a swallow-tailed butterfly. As for the colouring of these wings, gold and green and very rich, dark black were mixed together in broad bands and patches, and the wonderful thing was that they all flashed as brightly as jewellery, and yet looked as soft as velvet.

"I am glad," said this beautiful Butterfly, after Jack and Maggie had looked at him, for some time, without saying anything—they were so full of admiration—"I am glad that it was me you were speaking of in that way, because if you had meant any other species of butterfly it would have been a mistake. But *I am* the finest butterfly in the world."

Whether the new Butterfly was really a finer one than the Great Morpho it was difficult to decide, but he was so beautiful that Jack thought it was best not to mention the mistake *he* had made—and, besides, it would have been a bad way of beginning the conversation. So he only said, "What a beautiful butterfly you are, Mr Butterfly."

"The finest in the world, as you said yourself," said the Butterfly. "But what you said just before that, you know, was not in nearly such good taste. Wish I'd been in your collection indeed! However, it's too late now, which is one good thing."

"Oh yes, Mr Butterfly," said Maggie. "He's promised not to collect you any more, after this."

"You needn't tell me that," said the beautiful Butterfly. "It has been noised abroad, and every insect in the book knows it."

"But I only meant as long as I was here, you know," said Jack.

"'Never any more' were the words used, I think," said the new Butterfly, who seemed to have heard it all. "The promise was unconditional. But never mind," he continued, seeing that Jack looked a little unhappy. "Whilst you're here, you know, you'll be a real entomologist, and no one who is a real one ever wants to be a sham one again, so you won't either; and when one's made a promise not to do something

that one doesn't want to do, it's not so difficult to keep it, is it?"

"Oh no," said Jack. "It isn't, then."

"So you won't mind keeping it, will you?" said the Butterfly.

"If I didn't want to break it, I shouldn't, of course," said Jack rather doubtfully.

"I congratulate you on your honourable feelings," said the Butterfly. "Then perhaps, now, you'd like to ask me some questions?"

"Oh yes, Mr Butterfly," said Jack—he was not sorry to change the subject—"I should like to know your name, and—and where you live, because I don't think it can be in Brazil or Guiana, where the Great Morpho Butterfly does, because I was reading about the South American butterflies, but you weren't there, and if you did live there, you'd——"

"Why, I'd have come first, of course," said the Butterfly. "Naturally: and I don't think they should have left me out anyhow. Not there indeed!"

"Only because you don't live there, Mr Butterfly," said Maggie soothingly.

"They might have mentioned me, all the same," said the Butterfly, in a discontented voice. "For instance, when it came to the Great Morpho Butterfly, it might have been put, 'the most beautiful butterfly in the world, perhaps, except the still more lovely Great Bird-winged Butterfly of the Malay Archipelago.' That would have been doing him justice."

"Doing you justice, I suppose you mean?" said Maggie, thinking that the Great Bird-winged Butterfly must have made a mistake.

"Doing him justice," the Great Bird-winged Butterfly repeated, without altering a word. "It would

have been paying him a very handsome compliment indeed."

"Oh, then you're the Great Bird-winged Butterfly," said Jack. "You're called that, I suppose, because your wings are like a bird's—that is, something."

"They're like themselves, *I* think," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly. "As for birds, perhaps it would have been more sensible to call *them* after *me*—not that any of them are really like me, of course, but there may be that kind of resemblance that a starfish has to a star."

"Oh, but there are the humming-birds, you know, that are so very beautiful," said Jack, "and the birds of paradise, and the——"

"Anyhow," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, in a tone of voice as if that settled it, "this is an insect book, and not a bird book. If you prefer that kind, you had better go into one."

"Oh, we'd rather stay here and talk to you, Mr Butterfly," said Maggie, who was anxious to make things pleasant. "Then this is the Malay Archipelago, is it?"

"Yes, it is," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, "and 'Great Bird-winged Butterfly' is my full title."

Maggie saw that she had made a mistake. She knew that it was better to let dangerous subjects drop, but this was carrying the principle a little too far.

"Yes, this is the Malay Archipelago," the Great Bird-winged Butterfly continued (both Jack and Maggie had noticed that the forests and the butterflies flying about in them were not quite the same as they had been, a little before, but, as they were still forests and butterflies, they had not thought much about it). "That, you know, is my habitat."

“Do you mean it’s where you live?” asked Maggie.

“Of course I do,” the Great Bird-winged Butterfly answered. “Why, what else should I mean?”

“But it’s rather a funny word, isn’t it?” said Maggie. “We say that England’s our *country*.”

“That may do well enough for people,” the Great Bird-winged Butterfly explained, “but it’s not right in natural history. A Great Bird-winged Butterfly has it’s *habitat*. Well, if you’ve no further questions to ask me——”

“Oh yes, please, Mr Great Bird-winged Butterfly,” said Jack.

“You may call me ‘sir’ if you’d find it more convenient,” said the Butterfly.

Jack thought he would find it more convenient (and so did Maggie), and began again with, “Oh yes, please, sir. I——”

“And you’d better make haste,” said the Butterfly, “for a Great Bird-winged Butterfly has his own business to attend to. Well?”

“I suppose you fly very quickly, sir,” said Jack, “because your wings are so long, and look so strong.”

“Would you like to see me fly?” said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly in a condescending tone of voice.

“Oh yes, please, sir,” said both Jack and Maggie together, and, as they said so, the Butterfly, who had been on a leaf just in front of them, rose majestically into the air, and flew down one of the sun-chequered glades of the forest. He went very fast indeed, and with bold sweeps of his wings, so that it was really more like a bird, or at least not like a butterfly, because there was no fluttering at all. Whenever he passed a place that was sunny, the colours on his wings shone and sparkled most splendidly, but still, beautiful as

these flashes were, they were not quite so wonderful, Jack thought, as those of the Great Morpho Butterfly, and he doubted very much whether they could be seen a quarter of a mile off. In fact, although the Great Bird-winged Butterfly did not go nearly so far as that, they had begun to get quite faint by the time he turned, and came flying back again. "Well," he said, as he made a grand circle, before resettling on the leaf, "what did you think of that?"

"Oh, it was beautiful, sir," said Maggie, who, perhaps, now that Jack had promised not to collect insects, had admired him the most of the two. "You are a very beautiful butterfly indeed."

"We'd settled that, I thought," said the Bird-winged Butterfly; "but if you've anything to say in regard to my powers of flight——"

"Oh, I think you fly splendidly, sir," said Maggie; "I never saw a butterfly go faster."

"Did you ever see one go so fast?" said the Butterfly. "That's the point, you know."

"No, I don't think I ever did," said Maggie, who was not at all inclined to question the Butterfly's good opinion of himself. Such a beautiful insect, she thought, had a right to be a little conceited.

"But I suppose there are other butterflies who are beautiful and who fly well," said Jack, who didn't feel quite like Maggie about it.

"In that, as in all things," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, "there are the positive, the comparative and the superlative. The last you have just seen. If you want to see the other two you must look about."

Jack was not quite sure what the Butterfly meant exactly, but only that it was something conceited. What he had said about looking about though was good

advice, except that he had not waited for that. Indeed there were several butterflies on the wing, now, that he thought almost, if not quite, as beautiful as the Great Bird-winged Butterfly himself. One especially, that was swallow-tailed, too, and whose wings looked as if they were dusted with ruby and emerald, was so lovely that he couldn't help saying, as it flew by: "I think that's a very beautiful butterfly, sir."

"There is perhaps no butterfly," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, but not in an enthusiastic tone, which was funny, "that is *not* beautiful."

"But I mean that he's a very beautiful one," said Jack.

"I accept the correction," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, speaking in just the same way. "We belong, without question, to a *very* beautiful order of insects."

"Is it a common kind, sir?" asked Jack, as another of the same sort passed by.

"Quite," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, and if his tone had wanted enthusiasm before, he made up for it now. "There is nothing distinguished about him."

"Oh, then, he's *not* rare," said Jack to himself, and somehow knowing this seemed to make a difference in the butterfly's appearance, for one of the things that collecting does for one is to make one think that beautiful common things are less worth looking at than much less beautiful ones that are rare—there are some collectors, in fact, who even go further, and think nothing beautiful that is common. However, it was difficult to think like that of this butterfly, and so it was rather a lesson to Jack, though still (for lessons are not always learnt directly) he would have been better pleased if the butterfly had been rare as well as beautiful.

"I suppose you are rare, sir?" he said to the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, who had looked rather impatient whilst he was asking these questions.

"I'm not quite sure that I understand you," the Great Bird-winged Butterfly answered. "If you mean that I'm a rare sight to see, why, of course I am."

"No, it's not quite that I meant, sir," said Jack (though Maggie whispered to him that he had better say it was), "I mean, I suppose there are not very many of you."

"There wouldn't be any of us if some people could do all that they wanted to," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly excitedly, "those people, I mean, who come out to kill us and pin us into boxes, and then go home and sell us and pretend they're so learned, though all they've done is no more than what a poor silly boy, like you, does—I mean before he promises not to. Sometimes, when they've killed a butterfly, or a beetle, or any kind of insect that wasn't known before, their own name in Latin is given to it. There was never anything more silly, I think, for what have they had to do with it except just to see it and kill it? But they're prouder of that, and to see their own name in Latin, though it looks most ridiculous, than if they'd really found out something about us, instead of making it more difficult for anyone else to. I beg your pardon, but when I think of people of that sort it always excites me."

"I don't wonder that it does, sir," said Maggie sympathetically.

"Then I suppose there are not very many of you, sir," said Jack—he was really hoping that there were not, only he would have been surprised, and perhaps angry, if anybody had told him so.

"There are enough of us if only we're left alone and not murdered," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly

(who really didn't seem to know, so Jack thought, whether he was rare or common); "and fortunately we live a long way off, and the forests we like are very thick, and so unhealthy for people that they often die there—I wish they always did when they wanted to catch us, and that *I* could stick a pin through *them*, though I should be sorry to give them *my* name. And then, besides, we fly very fast, as I showed you, and so, on the whole, perhaps, we manage to hold our own."

"Oh, then you are common," said Jack, not quite as if he was glad of it.

"How dare you say so!" said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly angrily. "With the exception, perhaps, of the Purple Emperors—who, however, are not so handsome—there is no *more* aristocratic family than ours in the whole of the *Lepidoptera*. So much I can safely say."

"Oh, I didn't mean in that way," Jack explained. "I only meant that you were like that other butterfly that's——"

"I am not," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, still more angrily than before. "Like him indeed! Both in shape and colouring I am quite different, and the cut of my swallow-tail is not to be confounded with his."

"But that's not what I meant," said Jack.

"It's what you said," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly. "However, I'm glad to hear it."

"What I meant was," Jack continued, "that if you're not rare there must be a lot of you, or at least a good many, as there are of that other kind which you said were common. It doesn't make you less handsome, sir," he went on hurriedly—for the Great Bird-winged Butterfly didn't look one bit more pleased now than he had

done before—"because, of course, one can be handsome as well as"—he was going to say "common" again, but thought he had better not—"as well as there being a lot of one, and you see how very handsome that other butterfly is."

"Good-morning," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly very abruptly.

"Oh, you're not going, sir, are you?" said Maggie.

"If I could add to your knowledge in any really useful manner," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, pausing just as he was going to flap his wings, "I'd stay. But to sit here talking about butterflies whose affairs are not *my* affairs is unprofitable. Any information I can afford you in regard to my own, on which I have a right to speak, I am ready to, as I ought to be."

Jack saw then that it is better to talk to a handsome butterfly about itself than about other handsome butterflies that may be present also, because, of course, it knows more about itself, and, all at once, he thought of a question which he wondered he hadn't thought of before, because it really interested him very much. "Oh, sir, oh, Mr Great Bird-winged Butterfly," he said, "haven't you a very large caterpillar?"

"Whatever do you mean?" said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly. "Caterpillar! Why, what's that?"

"I mean when you were one," Jack explained; "weren't you a very big one?"

"I don't understand you," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly.

Jack was very much surprised at this, and, for a moment or two, he didn't know what to say. At last he began, "I mean, sir, before you had wings, and couldn't fly, but could only crawl, and had to eat leaves, and——"

"Nonsense!" said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly. "I wonder what you can be talking about. I had always wings, and could always fly. Crawl, indeed! Just fancy a Great Bird-winged Butterfly crawling!"

"Not when it is a butterfly," said Jack, "but before it is, you know, every kind of butterfly has to be a



"I was never so insulted before"

caterpillar, and caterpillars have to crawl, because they're so long, and have such short legs, and no wings—they're long, round things, you know, like maggots, only bigger—except the quite small ones, of course—only you would have been a very big one."

"How dare you call me a maggot!" said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly indignantly. "I was never so insulted before."

"He didn't mean that, I'm sure, sir," said Maggie,

"because he said you would have been such a big one—a big caterpillar, you know. I suppose you were a small one once," she added, not quite wisely, "but caterpillars are not really like maggots, even when they are small."

"I only said you were a caterpillar," said Jack, who felt angry too now, "and all butterflies and moths are caterpillars first, it's well known—and then chrysalises. When they're caterpillars they're always eating, but when they change into chrysalises they don't eat or do anything, but just hang from a leaf, or in a cocoon, if the caterpillar spins one, or sometimes they lie buried in the ground. They're like mummies, you know."

"I was never a mummy," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly.

"I only meant like one, sir," said Jack. "Of course you weren't really one, because you were alive, but anyhow you were a caterpillar, and a chrysalis, because—because you must have been. Everyone—I mean all the books say so."

"Mere gossip. Idle rumours. I beg you will contradict them," said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly, looking very uncomfortable. "Pay no attention, please, to such impertinent tittle-tattle."

"But it's true, really, sir," Jack persisted, "and there are pictures of it, which proves——"

"If you really *wish* to insult me——" said the Great Bird-winged Butterfly. What the end of the sentence would have been if he had stayed, or whether it was meant to have an end, neither Jack nor Maggie ever knew, for the next moment he was half way down the forest glade again, and when he got to the end of it, this time he did not turn back.

CHAPTER IV

A BUTTERFLY WITH A GRIEVANCE—AND OTHER BUTTERFLIES

“ I ’M sorry you’ve driven him away, Jack,” said Maggie reproachfully.

“ How could I tell he would be offended at my saying he was a caterpillar once ! ” said Jack. “ He knows it’s true.”

“ That’s why he didn’t like it,” said a voice that seemed just in front of them, but whose it was they couldn’t tell. “ If it had been a mistake he would not have felt it so much.”

Jack and Maggie looked all about, but there was only a leaf where the voice seemed to come from, and, all at once, the same voice said again, “ You may talk to a caterpillar of the butterfly it’s going to turn into, but it isn’t etiquette to remind a butterfly of its caterpillar days.”

“ Whoever are you ? ” said Maggie, as she and Jack looked about them in great surprise.

“ Why, a butterfly, to be sure,” said the voice, “ and if you don’t believe me you shall see me fly.” And then, in a moment, the leaf, as it had seemed to be, that was just in front of them, rose into the air and became a beautiful purple-winged butterfly. “ Catch me if you can ! ” it cried, and, in another moment, Jack and Maggie were racing after it, but of course without any idea of pins or collecting-boxes—that was not what the Butterfly had meant. For a little it went quite slowly, as though to let its pursuers keep up with it, then it made

several wide sweeps in the air, going at a great pace, and, all at once, just as it was quite near them again, disappeared.

"Where is it? What has become of it? How did we miss it?" cried the two astonished children, as they stopped still, after running a few more paces in the direction in which the Butterfly had been flying, just before it vanished. "Where can it have got to?"

"I don't know who 'it' is," said the voice again, which seemed now to come out of a low tree they had run by and left just behind them, "but if you mean me, this is where *I* have got to."

Jack and Maggie looked round directly. The tree, although it was not at all like winter where they were now, had not many leaves on it, and those that it had were brown and withered—or at least they looked as if they were withered, and, at any rate, they were brown. There was nothing like a butterfly on any one of them, but, all at once, one of these brown, withered leaves seemed to open (in the way that a book does), and, as it did so, it became purple, and there was the Butterfly again, just as it had looked when it was flying. "Here I am," it said, and then it put its wings together over its back again, and, in an instant, it was a brown, withered leaf.

"Do you think you could find me if you looked about for me?" said the leaf, as it seemed to be now—but which one it was, when they all looked the same, it was very difficult to say. Jack and Maggie came up and began to peer about at leaf after leaf, feeling each one with their fingers. But they were all just ordinary leaves, till, all at once, one that Jack was just going to catch hold of said, "Be very careful, if you please, now, because if you are rough you may hurt me," and, the next moment, he was holding what looked like a leaf,



Maggie and Jack looked about them in great surprise

but felt like something alive—in fact, like a butterfly, and a butterfly it was.

“Oh, how wonderful!” he cried, as he held up the Leaf Butterfly for Maggie to look at (for even when one is small, butterflies are still very light). “You feel like an insect, and I can see your legs now, but you look just like a leaf with a stalk to it.”

“The stalk is the ends of my two lower wings,” said the Leaf Butterfly, “so when I press them against the twig I come down upon, they look as if they were growing out of it. As for the rest, you can see now, even when I open them, that my two wings together, on each side, are just the shape of any of these leaves here, with its stalk joined to it. But, on this side, they are of such a beautiful purple colour (as you see) that you don’t notice that, and, besides, the four together, with my body in the middle, are not like a leaf at all. But now, when I shut them again,” he continued—and up the beautiful purple wings went, and were brown again in an instant—“the two pairs are pressed tight together, as if they were one, only it is the back of them that you see then, and as that is of the same colour as the leaves, as well as the same shape, and marked like them too, it is just as if you were looking at one single leaf; for you see, my body and antennæ come just between my wings—they are not pressed so tightly just there—so that they are hidden, and as for my legs, which just show, they are so slender and elegant that they do not arrest the attention.”

Jack and Maggie examined the butterfly very carefully, and they saw that it was just as he had said. Two cards put back to back look like one card with a pattern on each side of it. So it was with this butterfly when he lifted up his leaf-shaped wings, and as the



“ All at once they can't see me, or don't know who I am ”

pattern was the same on the two sides that showed, and exactly like a leaf, it was no wonder that he seemed to be a leaf, and that it was impossible to distinguish him from the other leaves amidst which he sat.

"But why are you made like that, Mr Leaf Butterfly?" asked Jack—for that that must be his name seemed perfectly clear—"I mean," he explained, "what good does it do you?"

"I don't think that's a *very* clever question," the Leaf Butterfly answered, "considering that you weren't able to find me when you wanted to. If you ever *did* want to catch butterflies and put pins through them again—as of course you never will now that you've promised not to—how could you catch them if they were to disappear, all of a sudden, and change into a dead leaf? That's what I do when someone comes running after me with a net in his hand, and it's very amusing, *I* think, to see how bewildered such a person looks, especially a grave-looking scientific gentleman, with spectacles."

"I'm sure it would amuse me," said Maggie, "and I think it must be splendid."

"And then there are the birds too," the Leaf Butterfly continued. "You should see how they look about them when they've been just going to get me, and, all at once, they can't see me, or when they do see me, but don't know who I am. It's the same with a great wasp or hornet—those horrible insects that murder butterflies sometimes. Oh, it's the finest trick to play on them all! and I wonder, sometimes, how I could ever have thought of anything so clever."

"But did you think of it, Mr Leaf Butterfly?" asked Jack, "because, of course, as you are made like that, you can't help looking like a leaf whenever you settle."

“What nonsense!” said the Leaf Butterfly. “Why, I should only have to hold my wings out flat—like this—after I had settled, and everyone would see I was a butterfly.”

“Oh yes; but you always do put them over your back then,” said Jack.

“Just so,” said the Leaf Butterfly; “and it’s because I’m clever, and know how to take people in, that I do it.”

“But other butterflies do it too, you know,” said Jack, “although they don’t look like leaves.”

“Then it’s not clever of *them*,” said the Leaf Butterfly. “They take me for a model, I suppose, which is all very well, but they forget that they have not my talent.”

“But——” began Jack.

“If they had,” said the Leaf Butterfly, “they might find something that they did look a little like, and only settle on that. Now I, though I look like a leaf, only look like a brown leaf, and if I were to settle amongst green ones perhaps I might be noticed by a sharp bird or lizard or tree-frog. Or if I were to go down on the bare ground, or a stone, or even on the trunk of a tree, depend upon it, my trick would soon be discovered. Well, what do I do, then? Why, I only settle on the twigs of trees like these, where all the leaves are brown, and of this kind. I hope you call *that* being clever. If you don’t, I shall think you are prejudiced.”

Maggie agreed with the Leaf Butterfly, and said she thought it was very clever. As for Jack, it had never occurred to him that a butterfly could be clever, and he didn’t feel quite sure of it now. The only thing he did feel sure of was that it was very funny, but as he could not think of any argument against the Leaf

Butterfly's conclusion, and did not want to be thought prejudiced, he felt obliged to agree with him and say that it was clever, too. The Leaf Butterfly looked very pleased when he heard this, and said, "I am glad you have yielded to the irresistible logic of facts," which seemed a very grand sentence even for a clever butterfly to make use of.

"I suppose, Mr Leaf Butterfly," said Jack, resuming the conversation, "that you are the only kind of butterfly who can play a trick of that sort?"

"I am the only one who can do it so well," the Leaf Butterfly answered, "but there are various inferior artists who make attempts of the kind. We need not, however, concern ourselves with them."

Jack thought he would like to see these other artists, too, and it occurred to him that butterflies, like people, might be prejudiced in their own favour. However, these other artists were not there, and there seemed no use in saying this to the Leaf Butterfly, who might have been offended. So he was going to change the subject, when the Leaf Butterfly said: "There are other tricks in the butterfly world besides imitating leaves, and some of them are not quite so innocent. It's quite right, of course, to save oneself from being eaten, but one should contrive to do it without hurting the feelings of others. Leaves, of course, have no feelings, but there are some of us, I grieve to say, who are not above mimicking their fellow butterflies. As for me, standing as I do on a pinnacle, I cannot be imitated, but here comes a butterfly who has a real grievance."

As he said this a very handsome Butterfly came flying up, and as he was preparing to settle, the Leaf Butterfly said, "Perhaps, if you were to ask him, he'd

tell it you. Anyhow, you'll be having a conversation, so good-bye for the present."

"Oh, but won't you stay and join in it, Mr Leaf Butterfly?" said Maggie.

"Not under present circumstances, I thank you," the Leaf Butterfly answered. "Nature, as I explained, has made *me* inimitable, but one would not wish to flaunt one's superiority."

With these words (which showed that he had an amiable character) the Leaf Butterfly flew off, and as he did so, the Butterfly he had spoken of, who had been circling round in the air in a bold and spirited manner, came down, almost where he had been sitting. He was about the size of the Leaf Butterfly itself, but, as he was not like a leaf, his shape, of course, was quite different, the wings being longer and narrower, and rounded at the ends. They were of a rich black, splashed and spotted, in various places, with scarlet, but, though this made him a gaudy insect, he was not such a beautiful one, even, as the Leaf Butterfly, whose wings were purple on the upper side, and not at all to be compared to the other two splendid ones—the Great Morpho and Great Bird-winged Butterflies. He sat, moving his antennæ from side to side, in rather a querulous manner, and every moment Jack and Maggie were expecting him to say something, but, as he didn't, Jack thought he would begin.

"Please, sir," he said, "will you tell us who you are?"

"I am a butterfly with a grievance," said the new arrival, thus confirming the Leaf Butterfly's report.

"I'm sorry for that, sir," said Maggie, though she could hardly help laughing to hear a butterfly intro-

duce itself in that way. "I suppose it's the collectors, but there are other butterflies, you know, who——"

"I'm not thinking of them just at present," the new Butterfly interrupted. "What I mean is that it's very hard to be mimicked."



"I am a butterfly with a grievance"

"Yes, it must be, sir," Maggie agreed; "but does anyone mimic you?"

"Anyone, indeed!" said the Butterfly angrily, "considering that about a dozen of them, at least, do."

"I suppose you mean other butterflies, sir?" said Jack, who remembered what the Leaf Butterfly had been saying, but didn't quite understand how one

butterfly could mimic another—it didn't seem nearly so easy as for one person to mimic another person, because people can make faces, but butterflies can't.

“Of course I do,” said the aggrieved Butterfly. “There's *Papilio*, *Euterpe*, *Leptalis*, *Protogonius*, *Ithoneis*, *Dioptis*, *Pericopis*, *Hyelosia*, and I don't know how many others, all keep doing it. They never leave off for a moment.”

“Oh dear, what names!” cried Maggie, who was not accustomed to Latin.

“Their names are the only satisfactory part of it,” said the Butterfly, “for if it wasn't for *them* there'd really be no way of knowing that they weren't me. But, of course, if a butterfly *is* a *Papilio*, or a *Pieris*, or a *Euterpe*, or the rest of them, he can't *be* a *Heliconea*, however much he may mimic him.”

“Then is your name *Heliconea*, Mr Butterfly?” asked Jack.

“Yes, it is,” the Butterfly answered, “and if ever you call me *Papilio*, or *Pieris*, or *Euterpe*, or *Leptalis*, or any of them, I'll never forgive you.”

“I never will if I can help it,” said Jack, “but I wish you'd tell me all about it, Mr *Heliconea*.”

“Listen, then,” said the *Heliconea* Butterfly, “and I'll try to explain it. *I*, you see, am the *Heliconea* Butterfly, but those others that I told you of, *Papilio*, *Pieris*, *Euterpe*, *Dioptis*, *Hyelosia*, *Protogonius*, *Ithoneis*, and so on—a whole crowd of them—they all mimic me, so that, all through my life, I keep being mistaken for either one or the other of them, and—which is almost as bad—they're always being mistaken for me.”

“But how do they mimic you, Mr *Heliconea*?” asked Jack, who thought that this was one of the most curious things he had ever heard of.

"How do they?" said the Heliconea Butterfly impatiently. "Why, by looking like me, to be sure, and flying about in the same way and in the same places as I do, and settling on the same shrubs and flowers—that's how they mimic me."

"But how can they look like you, Mr Heliconea, unless they *are* like you?" said Jack.

"Like me!" cried the Heliconea Butterfly. "Why, they're so like me that nobody can see any difference between us, which is one of the hardest things that anybody could possibly have to put up with, because, of course, there *is* the very widest difference between a Heliconea and every other kind of butterfly in the world. And to think that no one can see it! It's enough to provoke a caterpillar!"

"But if they really *are* like you, Mr Heliconea?" said Maggie.

"Of course they're not *really* like me," said the Heliconea Butterfly hastily. "I didn't mean that, of course. A Pieris, or any of them, could never be really like a Heliconea. What I meant was that they're like what I look like, and so superficial observers, who judge by the outside only, think we're the same."

"But if they all think so, Mr Heliconea?" said Maggie.

"If they do, it's because they're all superficial," said the Heliconea Butterfly.

"But what I meant was, Mr Heliconea," continued Maggie, "that if so many butterflies really *are* like you—I mean in that way—why then, you see, they can't help it, and so they don't really mimic you, because, to mimic anyone, one has to do it on purpose."

"No, I don't think they mimic you if it's like that," said Jack. "To mimic a person is to do what he does

after him, so as to make game of him, you know. You don't mimic him by looking like him, because you *are* like him, without trying to be."

"They *do* mimic me," said the Heliconea Butterfly excitedly. "It's known that they do. All the best naturalists say so, and it's in all the good natural history books. We're in one here, you know, and if you turn



"They *do* mimic me," said the Heliconea Butterfly excitedly

down the leaf I'm sitting on, you'll be able to find the place when you come out of it."

"He'd better use a marker," said Maggie, who would rather not read a book than not take care of it.

"It's very funny," said Jack, "because often one person is very like some other person, and yet that other person is never angry with him for it, as he would be if he were to mimic him, and nobody ever says that he mimics him, but only that he's like him."

"Besides," added Maggie, "another butterfly of your own species is more like you, I suppose, even than any

of those you complain of, and you don't say that *he* mimics you."

"*That* is a different thing," said the Heliconea Butterfly, "because *he* is a Heliconea, and can't help it."

"But the others can't help it either, if they're made so," said Jack.

"I know what I'm talking about," said the Heliconea Butterfly sulkily. "I tell you it's in all the good natural history books, and if *that* doesn't settle it, I should just like to know what does."

Jack certainly thought that nothing else could, quite so well, for he looked upon a good natural history book as much more reliable than any of the animals it was written about. It was likelier, he thought, that *they* should sometimes make a mistake (which would be when they didn't do things in the way they were said to) than a book that was known to be true.

There was a pause whilst Jack was coming to this conclusion (as for Maggie she didn't see it quite in the same way), but, as soon as he had come to it, he said: "But, Mr Heliconea, why is it that other butterflies mimic you—in that way?"

"It's a conspiracy," said the Heliconea Butterfly in a low and impressive voice. "Be quiet for a little, both of you, and I'll try to explain it."

"Oh, please do, Mr Heliconea," said Maggie.

"Didn't I say I was going to, if you'd only let me?" said the Heliconea Butterfly testily—it was easy to see that his temper had been soured.

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Maggie.

"Then show it by listening," said the Heliconea Butterfly. "Yes," he continued, "it's a conspiracy. You would hardly credit it—such malignity—but the facts are too strong to be set aside. However, the explana-

tion is not far to seek. Strange as it may appear to you"—here he lowered his voice a little, as though to make a very important communication—"though I am so very nice to look at, I am not at all nice to eat."

It didn't seem very strange to Jack and Maggie (who were not butterfly-eaters), nor did they quite see how it explained things. They looked puzzled, so the Heliconea Butterfly, after pausing a little, went on in this way: "No. I am *not* nice. The juices of my body are, I am proud to say, bitter, so that there is not a bird or a monkey, here, in the forest, who would have the courage to eat me. If they were to try to they would soon repent their temerity, and that, at an early period, is what they used to do. But they have learnt to know and to respect a Heliconea Butterfly, and now, when they see my splendid red and black wings glancing in the sunlight, instead of flying after me, or trying to catch me amongst the trees, any more, they just keep out of my way. Spiders, again, if I should happen to get into one of their webs, make haste to drop me out of it. I am protected, in fact—that is the proper word—by my own inherent qualities. But these other butterflies—that mob of impostors that I told you of—are protected in no such way. *Their* juices, if you please, have a mawkish sweet taste, so that birds and monkeys enjoy eating *them*. At least they would do so if they knew who they were, but—oh, the meanness of it!—instead of having the courage to submit to what is right and proper, they mimic us—the cowards!—and, by this base subterfuge, escape the fate that was ordained for them, and which they so richly deserve."

"The birds and monkeys don't eat them because they think they're you, I suppose," said Maggie.

"Exactly," said the Heliconea Butterfly. "There never *was* a baser conspiracy, was there?"

"Well, I don't quite know," said Maggie (which meant that she didn't agree with him). "There was the gunpowder plot, if it comes to that, and the——"

"Oh, don't tell me," said the Heliconea—so Maggie stopped, and didn't tell him.

"But you see," said Jack, who thought the whole story a very peculiar one, "if they didn't mimic you like that, *they'd* be eaten."

"So they ought to be," said the Heliconea Butterfly.

"It's easy to say that," said Jack, "but *you* wouldn't like to be eaten, you know."

"Perhaps I wouldn't," said the Heliconea Butterfly, "but if it was my mission to be, why I would be. I should not be so pitiful as to evade my destiny. Why, do you suppose I'd mimic them?"

"Why, that's just what you do do," said a voice overhead, and, the next moment, first the air, and then the bushes and trees, all about, were filled with a fluttering troop of butterflies, who all seemed to be Heliconeas, and "That's just what you do do" was repeated by one and all of them.

"How dare you say so?" said the Heliconea Butterfly, quivering with indignation. "You shameless things, you!"

"If you don't mimic us why are you so like us?" said another of the troop.

"It's *you* that are like *me*," shrieked the Heliconea. "You impostors, you! You know that you are."

"Why, how can we be like you if you're not like us?" said a third one, who might have been the Heliconea himself, the resemblance was so remarkable. "That's impossible, you know."

"It's because you mimic me, impostors!" said the poor Heliconea. "You're always doing it. You know you are."

"If it comes to that, why shouldn't it be you that are always mimicking us?" said the other one, and then there was a general laugh.

"Nonsense!" said the Heliconea Butterfly. "A crowd, which is what all of you are, can mimic one person, but how can one person mimic a crowd?"

"Well, then, it may be you and these others who all mimic me," said another of the butterflies.

"Yes, or me"—"or me"—"or me," tittered all the rest of them.

"Never mind," said the Heliconea Butterfly, looking at Jack and Maggie. "They *know* I despise them."

"That's no argument," said a thoughtful-looking butterfly, one of the troop, that had not yet spoken. "It only shows you're proud."

"And conceited," said another.

"And ridiculous," added a third.

"An unpleasant state of mind altogether, *I* should say," remarked a fourth.

The Heliconea Butterfly took a firm hold of the twig it was sitting on, with all its six legs, and composed its wings, which had been strongly fluttering. It was evident that it was making a strong effort to be calm. "Look here, you *creatures*," it said at last, "*you're* good to eat—which is all you are good for—and *I'm* not. Now, do you think *I'd* have mimicked *you*, to get eaten?"

"But you might have mimicked us to look beautiful, you know," said one of the finest of the band, on which the Heliconea lost all its calmness.

"As for flavour," said another one, "that, of course, is

a matter of taste, and we *do* know of a spider who enjoys yours, poor as it is, and does *not* drop you out of his web, when he catches you."

"Yes, and of a large yellow-and-black-banded wasp," added another, "who just bites off your wings, and rolls you into a ball, and flies off with you, to feed his grubs with. *They* like you very much."

"They're interesting exceptions," cried the Heliconea Butterfly, in a tumult of passion.

"Very interesting indeed," said the last speaker.

"Most significant," remarked another.

"Seems to upset the theory, somewhat," said the thoughtful butterfly.

"You must get a great many exceptions to do that," said the Heliconea scornfully. "Two are nothing."

"If we were to get two hundred," said the thoughtful butterfly, "*you'd* only say they proved the rule."

"It wouldn't be I, it would be the well-known naturalists," the Heliconea Butterfly retorted. "One must go by them, and they all say that *you* mimic *me*."

This last remark really did seem to disconcert the mockers, and Jack saw that the Heliconea Butterfly had used his very strongest argument. When he had done so he drew himself up to his full height (as butterflies measure it), and said, with great dignity: "I will not further prolong an interview which is painful to all of us and degrading to me," and with this he flew away.

"We might have flown after him if we'd cared to," said the butterfly that was nearest to Jack and Maggie. "He can't get away from us if we don't want him to."

"I suppose you're the butterflies he told us about," said Jack, "only I can't quite remember your names."

"*I* am Papilio," said the nearest butterfly.

"Pieris *I* am," said the one next him.

"*My* name's Euterpe," said a very pretty and elegant-looking butterfly (for though they were all so like the Heliconea yet they differed a little from one another). And then they all called out their names, one after another, which were just what the Heliconea Butterfly had said they were.

"Please tell me, now," said Jack—for he thought it a good opportunity of finding out—"is it really he that mimics you, or do you mimic him?"

"Oh, I suppose it's we, as the books say that it is," said the Papilio Butterfly, who seemed to speak for all the rest. "Only we like to pretend that it's the other way, just to tease him."

"I don't think that's at all *kind*," said Maggie.

"It's great fun," said the Papilio Butterfly.

"But is it right?" said Maggie gravely.

"Why, of course it isn't," the Papilio answered—just as if he was surprised at such an easy question.

"That's why it's fun," said the Pieris, who sat next him.

"Things are never fun when they're right," remarked Euterpe (she spoke just like a pert young lady), "so one's got to choose one or the other. *I* choose fun."

"So do I"—"and I"—"and I," cried one voice after another, and then they all rose up into the air, and fluttered and danced about in the sunshine, in the merriest way imaginable.

"You're very naughty butterflies, that's what *I* think you are," said Maggie, on which there were little tinkling cries of "Agreed!" "Agreed!" and the fluttering went on more merrily than ever.

"But after all," said Jack, who couldn't get over this part of it, "you can't help mimicking him, can you?"

"Not we," said all the dancing, fluttering butterflies. "You see, we're born like this, so we have to."

"It's a very funny sort of mimicry," said Jack.

"Between ourselves," said Papilio, flying to his ear, "that's just what we think of it. It's not mimicking at all, really, because we don't do it on purpose, only the great, learned naturalists say that it is, so, of course, there's an end of it. We often have a laugh at them amongst ourselves—they *do* talk such nonsense—only it wouldn't do to offend them, because it's they who put us in the books."

"They might leave us out, if we did," said Euterpe, who had come down to listen when she heard whispering, "and that would be dreadful. And besides," she continued, "if it wasn't mimicking it wouldn't be nearly such fun, so, for my part, I'm glad that the books say it is. It's a grand thing for us butterflies, *I* think."

"Well," said Jack, "whatever it is, whether it really is mimicking the Heliconea Butterfly, or only being like him—only, of course, if the good natural history books do call it mimicking I suppose it must be—but whatever it is, *I* think it's the very funniest thing in—well, in entomology, and I don't suppose there's anything else at all like it."

"Still, as you are doubtless aware," said Papilio, "it includes other instances. For instance, in Asia, here, and also in Africa, which you'll get to soon, if you go on, I myself and Diameda both mimic Danaida and Arcoëda."

"And of course you know that Euplœio Midamus is aped by the same two families," said Pieris.

"Then that fine moth, Sphœcia Crabroformis, which I daresay you've met with," said another of the butterflies

—there was really no remembering the names of all of them—“closely resembles *Crabro Vulgaris*, as of course I needn’t tell *you*.”

“And *Calopteron* of Nicaragua is hardly to be distinguished from *Piomia Lycoides*, a fact which I needn’t remind you of,” said yet another one. “They’re all in here, you know, if you’d like to see them.”

It seemed to Jack that these merry butterflies were having a laugh at him, too, as he did not know any of these cases, and had never heard of such a thing as mimicry or mimetic resemblance (which is another name for it) in natural history, before. So as one does not like to be made fun of, especially in a book, he said, rather stiffly: “I think, if you don’t mind, I’d rather see some insects that look like themselves, instead of seeming to be somebody else—or something else,” he added, remembering the Leaf Butterfly.

“Oh, we don’t mind,” said one of the butterflies, “only you’ll find that difficult, now, if you go straight on in the proper way; but perhaps you’d like to skip.”

“Skip?” said Jack, not quite knowing what the Butterfly meant.

“Only you could only skip through it, even if you did,” the Butterfly continued. “It’s not as if you were outside, so unless you go backwards or stand still——”

“I’m not going to do either,” said Jack decidedly.

“Then you must meet them, I’m afraid,” said the Butterfly, “and they’ll all be in character, for some little while.”

“It’s like walking about at a fancy-dress ball,” said another of the butterflies, “and if you’ve never been to one of the sort, I advise you not to miss it.”

“But I’d like to see some caterpillars now,” said Jack

—for indeed he was very interested in caterpillars, and was always looking about for them.

"There'll be plenty of them there," said the Euterpe Butterfly, "and they're amongst the cleverest make-ups."

"Do you mean to say that they take one in?" said Jack, who couldn't imagine a caterpillar looking like anything else *but* a caterpillar.

"You'll soon find *that* out," said another of the party. "Only keep your courage up. There's no real reason to be frightened."

"Frightened indeed!" said Jack, but Maggie began to feel a little nervous.

"It's enough to frighten one to look at any of them, *I* think," said Euterpe. "And, besides, they're all dreadfully slow."

"I don't wonder at *your* thinking so," said a male butterfly archly, "even if they'd as many legs as a centipede—and they have almost."

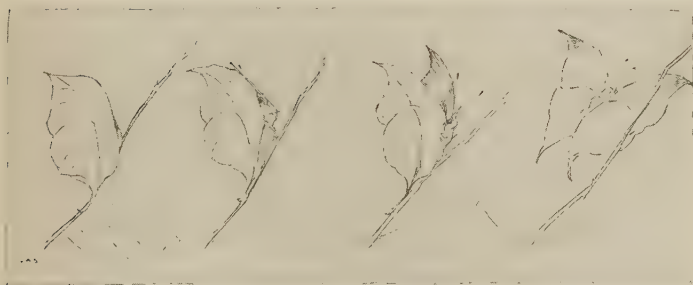
"They haven't," said Jack, who had paid great attention to caterpillars. "They've only six, really. The others are not real legs, but claspers, and you can't expect——"

"I'm sure *I* shouldn't, from a caterpillar," said Euterpe, "or anything else lively, either. However, if *you're* fond of them——"

This was said so disdainfully that Jack got quite angry, especially as all the other butterflies began to laugh; so he called out, "You needn't be so *very* contemptuous, any of you, because you were all of you caterpillars yourselves, at one time, and you know it, however you speak of them now."

At this all the butterflies looked very angry, and began to flutter so fast round Jack and Maggie's heads, that every one of them seemed to be in twenty different

places at the same time. As for their shapes, there was no seeing them, and soon their colours began to mix together too, so that one couldn't tell which was which. Then, all at once, there were no butterflies at all, but only an angry appearance in the sky, which faded gradually, and, as it faded, the country, though it was still quite tropical, somehow did not look quite the same, but had something about it—and so had everything—which caused Jack to whisper to Maggie: "I do believe we've got into another chapter."



CHAPTER V

CATERPILLARS EXTRAORDINARY

MAGGIE was just going to say that she thought so too, when, all at once, she gave a little scream, and said, "Oh, Jack, what a dreadful thing! It's going to bite me! Do come!"

"What is it?" asked Jack.

"I don't know," Maggie answered, "because I've never seen it or read about it. But it's dreadful. Look!"

Jack was at Maggie's side by this time (they had got amongst some rather dense vegetation and had not kept quite close together), and, as soon as he saw what she was looking at, he cried out that it was an ant of some sort, but an enormously large one. He might well have said that—even if he had been his proper size, instead of the right one for talking to insects—for the ant was several times larger than any he had seen in England, and looked horribly savage.

It was standing in a very threatening attitude indeed, with its jaws, which were like two long, sharp-pointed scimitars, wide open. Some of its legs were quite off the ground—it seemed to be prancing with rage—and they, as well as its antennæ, and its two round shiny black eyes, which had a horrible stare in them, were as unpleasant to look at as the cruel-looking jaws themselves.

"What shall we do?" said Maggie. "If it *were* to bite us, it's almost big enough to bite us in two."

"I don't think it will if we keep quite quiet," said Jack; "or," he added—for just then the ant made a very

nasty movement, first to one side and then the other, as if it thought it would—"or if we were to walk away."

Maggie thought this was much the best idea, and both she and Jack began to walk away in the same way that soldiers walk away from a battlefield when they have no chance of winning, and it would be foolish to stay any longer. The ant did not follow them—indeed it disappeared, all of a sudden, rather mysteriously—so that Jack, when he looked round, was just going to



"Look out, Maggie," Jack shouted

say, "You needn't run, Maggie," when, all at once, he found himself almost in the very jaws of a snake that looked quite large enough to swallow him, though it was nothing like so large as a snake usually is. "Look out, Maggie," he shouted, and then, as he made a jump to one side, he stumbled, and Maggie fell over him.

"I don't think he'll hurt us. He isn't following," said Maggie, as they both got up.

"It isn't the ant," cried Jack. "There's a snake. Mind, Maggie! Oh!"

It was no wonder that he said "Oh!" for there, just

in front of him, what should he see, instead of a snake, which there had been only a minute ago, but a fine large caterpillar that was looking at him, so it seemed to Jack, with a humorous twinkle in its eye.

"Well," said the Caterpillar, which was a very fine one, "so I took you in, did I?"



The Caterpillar looked at Jack with a humorous twinkle in its eye

"I don't think you did, Mr Caterpillar," Jack answered, "because it wasn't you that I saw. It was a snake, and—oh, Mr Caterpillar!"—for, all at once, there was the snake again, only now there could be no doubt that the caterpillar and snake were one, and as Jack had seen the change made, and exactly how it was made, it was evident to him that it was a caterpillar that had made itself look like a snake, and not

a snake that had made itself look like a caterpillar. It was by drawing its real head back into a fold or two of its skin—which is what a good many caterpillars can do—that the deceptive appearance had been produced, for on each side of one of these folds, and just in the proper place for it, there was a mark which looked exactly like an eye, and a snake's eye too, for snakes have rather peculiar eyes; then, in front of the eyes, and in the right place for that too, the skin on each side of the Caterpillar's body was puckered up so as to look like the line of the snake's mouth, and, a little higher up, just where it ought to be, the markings made a sort of false nose. The other colours and markings had just the appearance of scales, and they went into all the patterns that they always do go into on a snake's head. Behind the false head, of course, there was the real body of the Caterpillar, and, as that is not so very unlike a snake's body, at any time, being long and round, it was easy to think it belonged to one now, when it seemed to have a snake's head at the end of it—and besides, it was the head much more than the body that attracted attention. That was the way in which the Caterpillar seemed to change itself, all of a sudden, into a snake, and as it reared itself up, at the same time, and made a writhing sort of motion, it looked so like one that the only wonder was it didn't hiss.

"Well," said the Caterpillar, in just the same tone of voice, and with just the same humorous twinkle in its eye as before, "so I took you in, did I?"

"I suppose you did, Mr Caterpillar," Jack answered, "and I never saw anything so funny."

"Clever, perhaps you mean?" said the Caterpillar. "You didn't seem to think it funny at all."

"I didn't, then," Jack answered, "and I didn't think it clever either, because then I thought it was a snake, and so I was only——"

"Frightened?" suggested the Caterpillar.

"Anybody might be frightened of a snake," Jack retorted.

"Or of an ant," said a voice just behind him, and, turning round, there was the same ant again, with its jaws open, and looking every bit as ill-natured as it had before.

"You needn't walk away again, this time," said the Ant-Caterpillar. "Perhaps it would be better to stay and look at me a little more attentively."

"You don't mean to say," said Jack, as both he and Maggie began to follow this advice, "that——" And then there were two exclamations of astonishment, for—wasn't it wonderful?—the ant had turned into a caterpillar too.

But it was not done in the same way at all, for this Caterpillar used the end of his body, instead of the front part, to produce the effect. His last pair of legs—or claspers, for they were not real legs—were exactly like an ant's jaws, and above them his body was coloured in such a way that it made the head, with its two black, staring eyes, to which the jaws belonged. The legs and antennæ were formed (that is imitated) by the other claspers, so that the Caterpillar had only to turn up its tail, as it were, to become an enraged-looking ant. As soon as it put it down again the ant had disappeared and become part of a caterpillar's body, and it was only then that Jack and Maggie noticed the other part, and saw that it was all just a caterpillar. Perhaps, when the Caterpillar turned up its tail, its head and the front part of its body

were always a little hidden amongst the leaves of the plant it was on, but, of course, when one is frightened by an angry ant, one does not think about caterpillars, and would hardly notice one, even if one saw it.

“Well,” said the Ant-Caterpillar, as he turned round and looked at his visitors with his real eyes, “what did you think of it? Did the impersonation appeal to you?”

“Do you mean the—the thing that you looked like?” said Jack.

“The rendering is what I mean,” said the Ant-Caterpillar. “It was more than a mere make-up, you know.”

“Yes, you wriggled as well,” said Jack.

“A nice critique indeed!” said the Ant-Caterpillar. “Wriggled!”

“You don’t speak like an artist,” said the Snake-Caterpillar, “and that I will say.”

“But you did move from side to side, as if you were angry, didn’t you, Mr Caterpillar?” said Maggie.

“If you mean that I trembled with passion,” said the Ant-Caterpillar, “*that* was my conception of the character.”

“Oh, I see, Mr Caterpillar,” said Maggie, and she thought to herself, “It’s for all the world as if one was on the stage.”

“Perhaps it didn’t impress you?” said the Ant-Caterpillar in a depressed tone of voice.

“It frightened me very much, if that’s what you mean,” said Maggie, “and it did Jack too. We both ran away, you know.”

“True,” said the Ant-Caterpillar. “Then may I venture to believe that it *did* impress you?”

"Oh yes, certainly, Mr Caterpillar," said Maggie. "I thought—it seemed to me that you did it——"

"You needn't try to get up to it," said the Ant-Caterpillar. "*That* would be difficult. It is enough that it spoke to you."

"Oh, it was splendid, if it comes to that," said Jack, feeling that he ought to be appreciative too.

The Ant-Caterpillar looked very pleased, and made a low bow to both Jack and Maggie.

"I am happy," he said, "that my powers have not been wasted on an inappreciative audience."

"Praise is so necessary to the real artist," remarked the Snake-Caterpillar.

"I believe he wants some himself," Maggie whispered to Jack, and then she said out loud, "I think *you* did it beautifully, too, Mr Caterpillar."

"I carried out my conception," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "It was perhaps a poor one."

"Oh, I don't think it was, Mr Caterpillar," said Maggie.

"You looked just like a snake, anyhow," Jack remarked. "But then, of course," he added, "you're made like that."

"You may well say so," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "It is, as you divine, inborn."

"I mean it's not difficult," said Jack.

"Not for me," said the Snake-Caterpillar—"for others it is impossible."

"Because they're not marked like you, Mr Snake-Caterpillar," said Jack.

"Certainly not," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "Nothing marked about *them*."

"But I mean their colours," Jack explained.

"I mean their abilities," said the Snake-Caterpillar.

"But you know if it wasn't for your colouring, Mr Snake-Caterpillar——" Jack was beginning.

"Perhaps you think I'm like a snake now," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "Do you? Well, then, look at me."

Jack did look at him—and Maggie too—he was certainly like a caterpillar, and they had both of them to confess that if he had been just the same when they saw him, at first, they could never have taken him for a snake. His head was now in its usual position, and, of course, quite visible, so, as there was no false head—for that was only made by the real one going in—there was nothing to look like a snake, any more than with other kinds of caterpillars. The markings, of course, which made the snake's head, were still there, on the Caterpillar's body, but, as they had not come together into their proper places, they looked quite different. It is true that the Caterpillar still looked a little funny, but that is not quite the same thing as looking like a snake.

"Well?" said the Snake-Caterpillar, "and what have you to say now? Am I a snake or a caterpillar?"

"Oh, you're not a snake yet, Mr Snake-Caterpillar," said Jack, "but that's because——"

"The reason is," said the Snake-Caterpillar, "that I have not yet assumed the part. Coloration and markings are an assistance, of course, but something higher is required."

"It is," said the Ant-Caterpillar. "Mere properties, by themselves, are useless."

"My fellow-artiste understands me," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "One must feel the inspiration."

"One must," said the Ant-Caterpillar, "and *then*——"

"Why, *then*——" said the Snake-Caterpillar, and, in a moment, there was a snake, again, on one side of Jack

and Maggie, and an ant on the other, both of them looking so real and alarming that it was all either of them could do to prevent themselves walking away again.

"I never knew there *were* such caterpillars," said Maggie to Jack. "Do ask them why they do it."

"I suppose it's to frighten people," said Jack. "Isn't it, Mr Caterpillars?"

"Well, of course," the Snake-Caterpillar admitted, "when a bird or a lizard happens to see me in undress, if I may so express myself——"

"'*Resting*' is what I should say," said the Ant-Caterpillar.

"The very word," said the Snake-Caterpillar. "When such a creature sees me '*resting*,' and has the impertinence to want to eat me, and, all at once, the great impulse seizes me, and I become a snake—well, it has an effect."

"It produces an electric thrill," said the Ant-Caterpillar, "which is just what my ant-impersonation does."

"But don't some birds eat ants?" asked Jack.

"It depends on the ant," the Ant-Caterpillar answered. "Such a one as *I* impersonate is not often interfered with."

"So you neither of you get eaten?" said Maggie.

"Incidentally it may have that effect," said the Ant-Caterpillar.

"That," said the Snake-Caterpillar, "is a side-issue."

"It's very important, anyhow," said Jack.

"I'm glad you consider it so," said the Snake-Caterpillar.

"But isn't it that that makes you do it?" Jack insisted.

“Not at all,” said the Snake-Caterpillar, and the other one shook its head in quite an offended way, and ejaculated, “Ridiculous!”

“But what does, then?” asked Jack, surprised.

“Artistic necessity would be *my* explanation,” said the Ant-Caterpillar.

“The need of dramatic expression, *I* should say,” the Snake-Caterpillar remarked.

“But——” began Jack.

“Further than that,” said the Ant-Caterpillar, “we cannot explain it.”

“It is a mystery even to us,” said the Snake-Caterpillar, in a tone which was evidently meant to close the inquiry.

“Genius,” observed the Ant-Caterpillar, “*is* a mystery.”

It seemed to Jack that whatever the two caterpillars might think about it—and it was evident that they were both of them *very* conceited—their real reason for making themselves look like an angry ant and an irritated snake was that they should be let alone, and not eaten by birds and lizards, “though to be sure,” said Maggie, “they may have got so into the habit of it, now, that they hardly know why they do do it.”

“Anyhow,” said Jack, “it’s one of the queerest things that there ever was, *I* think, and I never knew there was anything like it in—well, in entomology.”

“There’s nothing half so clever, if that’s what you mean,” said the Snake-Caterpillar.

“Or a quarter, either,” the Ant-Caterpillar added.

“I’m not so sure of that,” said a little meek voice, that did not sound very far off, although it was so low.

Jack and Maggie peered all about amongst the

grasses and shrubs growing near them, but couldn't see anything—at least they couldn't see any caterpillar, which was the kind of thing they were thinking of, just then.

"There are flower-artistes as well as animal-artistes, you know," said the same voice, which seemed, now that they had moved a little towards where it had come from before, to be almost at Maggie's side. She looked down—it was not very far she had to look—and there, sure enough, was a pretty little flowering plant, all covered with pretty little flower-buds. It was from amidst these that the voice seemed to come, and, at last, when it said, "If you pick me you'll see what I mean," Maggie felt sure that it was one or other of the buds on a particular stalk about an inch and a half long, that had spoken. "I didn't know flowers could talk, as well as insects," said Maggie—for, by this time, it seemed to her quite natural that insects should.

"I said flower-artistes—not flowers," said the voice.

"I expect it's a caterpillar, really," said Jack.

"I don't think it can be, this time," said Maggie. "They must be real buds."

"If a caterpillar can look like an ant or a snake," said Jack—"and we know it can, you know—it might just as easily look like a flower-bud."

"But not like a number of flower-buds," said the voice. "That would be a little more difficult."

There certainly were a great number of flower-buds on the stalk that Jack and Maggie were looking at, and they hung in little clusters all the way down it. It hardly seemed possible, as the voice had said, that a caterpillar could be all of them, but Jack thought that perhaps it might be just one, and the rest of him

—but then, where was the rest of him?—unless——
“Oh, Jack,” cried Maggie, all of a sudden, “I believe it’s the flower-stalk.”

Of course the next thing to do was to touch the flower-stalk, and then there could be no doubt about it. It felt like a caterpillar, which nothing *but* a caterpillar could do. But a caterpillar with flowers growing on it!—it was still a mystery.

“I don’t think they can be growing on him,” said Maggie, “because, if they were, he would *be* a stalk.”

“But if they’re not, how do they get there?” said Jack; “I’m sure *they’re* not *him*.”

“If you’d like to take them off,” said the Caterpillar, “I could put on some fresh ones, and then, of course, you’ll see how I do it.”

“But won’t it hurt you, Mr Caterpillar?” said Maggie, as she took hold of a bud very gently.

“Give it a pull,” said the Caterpillar, and, as Maggie did so, off it came, and so did all the other ones, without any difficulty. Then it was seen that the Caterpillar had a number of spines running, in pairs, down his back, and it was these spines that had made the little stalk-lets of the flower-buds all down what had seemed the larger stalk, which was the caterpillar himself.

“Oh, I see,” said Maggie, “he had stuck his spines into the buds.”

“He had *not*,” said the Caterpillar. “Why, don’t you see my silk upon all of them?”

“Oh yes,” said Maggie. Both she and Jack had noticed this silk, but they had thought it belonged to the bud and not to the Caterpillar—some buds, as one knows, are woolly.

“Now,” said the Caterpillar, “if you’ll just look—nothing like actual observation, you know.” With this

he nipped off, with his mandibles, one of the little buds which grew all about on the plant where he was, and, holding it between his two first pairs of legs—the real ones, not the claspers—began to cover it with a little film of silk, which kept coming out of his mouth. Then he twisted himself round, so that the bud touched one of the spines of his back, and began to fasten it on to this by twisting the silk round both bud and spine. It was soon fixed, and then the Caterpillar nipped off a second bud, and fastened it to the first, and a third to the second, so that they hung in a little string. The next bud he fastened to another of his spines, and so he went on, hanging three or four upon each, till he was so covered up with buds, again, that very little was to be seen of him, and the little that was didn't look at all like a caterpillar.

"There!" he said, when he had finished. "It's an ingenious idea, is it not, as well as a pretty one? That's what I meant, you know, when I called myself a flower-artist."

"You needn't be so vain about it," said the Snake-Caterpillar, who, with his fellow-artist, the Ant-Caterpillar, had been looking on disdainfully, all the while, "because you don't really act, you know. There is no impersonation."

"A mere Jack-in-the-Green," said the Ant-Caterpillar. "True art is entirely wanting."

"Oh, it's easy enough," said the little Caterpillar, speaking out of his little flowery forest of buds, again, "if one's born in costume, but I do my own dressing up, which seems to me cleverer."

"Upholstery merely, I call it," said the Snake-Caterpillar contemptuously. "Still life — animation is wanting. There is no comparison between us."

"A lower branch altogether," said the Ant-Caterpillar. "There is nothing informing. Why, you are not even a mummer."

"Never mind them," said Maggie. "Whatever it is, it's very interesting, and, for my part, I'd rather be mistaken for a flower than for an ant or a snake. You needn't be offended," she added, as both the Ant- and Snake-Caterpillars began to crawl away; but, whether they needed to be or not, they evidently were, and neither of them turned back again. "Never mind," she said, "if they will go. They were very clever, but rather too conceited, and one can do without creatures like that."

"I hope you don't think *me* conceited," said the little Caterpillar anxiously.

This was a point which Maggie did not feel quite so sure about, and though she said, "Oh no, Mr Caterpillar"—for she didn't want not to be polite—it was in rather a doubtful tone of voice.

"You see," said the Caterpillar, "when one feels that a thing *is* clever, it's like telling a story to say that it isn't."

"But one needn't say that it is, either," said Maggie, "and one needn't seem to think so."

"But *that* would be affected," said the Caterpillar, "and you wouldn't like that."

"Of course not," said Maggie decidedly. "The best way, perhaps," she added, "is not to think about it."

"But then, if you can't help it," said the Caterpillar, "and have nothing else *to* think about, and wish to be truthful——"

"Oh, well——" said Maggie, but, not knowing what else to say, she didn't get any further.

"However," the Caterpillar continued, "there's one way out of the difficulty."

"Is there?" said Maggie, who, for her part, didn't see any.

"Yes," said the Caterpillar. "You see, for a caterpillar to bite off buds and then fasten them, with silk, together, and on to the spines on his own back, until he's quite hidden by them, and doesn't seem to be a caterpillar at all, is, of course, very—in fact, extremely clever, though I, perhaps, should not say so. But now if *you* say that *you* think it's clever, first, then *I* need only agree with you, and you couldn't expect me not to, could you?"

"I suppose not," said Maggie.

"It would not be *sincere*, you know," said the Caterpillar. "Well?"

"Well, if it comes to that, I do think it's very clever, Mr Caterpillar," said Maggie, upon which the Caterpillar looked extremely pleased, and said, "I'm delighted to agree with you. So that difficulty's over," he continued, "and now, if you like, I'll tell you something else."

"What is it, Mr Caterpillar?" asked Maggie.

"Why," said the Caterpillar, as if he was telling a very great secret, "I eat the buds that I fasten on to me. I thus make them answer two purposes—food and concealment. Well?"

"Well, that's clever too," said Maggie.

"It's so nice to agree with people," said the Caterpillar, looking pleased again.

"But if you eat the buds, Mr Caterpillar," said Jack, "how can you have them on your spines?"

"That's the most ingenious part of it," the Caterpillar answered. "You see, when I put them on, to show you, I wanted to be quick, but when I'm not in a hurry I eat the inside of the buds out first. Then I just tie on the empty shells, and no one could ever tell the difference."

“That *is* clever,” said Jack. “Then you don’t eat leaves?”

“Leaves!” cried the Caterpillar contemptuously. “That would be coarse diet indeed.”

“Other caterpillars do,” said Jack.

“I know they do,” said the Caterpillar, in a very satisfied tone of voice. “We are well differentiated.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Jack, who was not accustomed to quite such long words.

“I mean,” said the Caterpillar, “that we all eat what we can best assimilate. Others—the common herd—assimilate leaves. *I* can only assimilate flowers—and they must be buds too. Well?”

It was plain that the new Caterpillar was just as conceited as either of the other two, but neither Jack nor Maggie wished to encourage him in being so, so they didn’t say anything, this time, when he said, “Well?” After a little, Jack, who thought he would like to know something more about him, said, “I suppose you make a cocoon, Mr Caterpillar—like other caterpillars,” he added in a marked manner.

“Certainly not,” the Caterpillar answered.

“Do you mean that you don’t make one?” said Jack.

“I mean that I don’t make one like other caterpillars, which was what you supposed I did,” replied the Caterpillar. “Show me another caterpillar,” he continued, “who weaves a flowery cocoon.”

“Then you use the buds for that too?” said Maggie.

“I cover it all over with them, as I do myself,” said the Caterpillar, “and if you know of anything more tasteful you can tell me about it. Also you may call me the Flower-Bud Caterpillar, which is a pretty name, and suits me.”

“He’s getting worse and worse,” said Maggie, and,

indeed, the Caterpillar seemed to think this a good opportunity for insisting again upon its superiority. It drew itself up, with its flower-buds all about it, and said, as though it were giving a little lecture: "Some caterpillars exhibit naturally a more or less striking resemblance to various protected species, for example a snake, or an ant sufficiently formidable to be feared. One species, however,—the ingenious and elegant little Flower-Bud Caterpillar—contrives to make itself look like the blossoms on which it feeds——"

"And another," said a very small voice indeed, quite near to them, "contrives to make the leaf on which *it* feeds look like *it*."

"That would be more ingenious still," said Maggie, looking about for another caterpillar, though she hardly expected to see one, or, at least, to see anything that looked like one—it would not have seemed natural, where they were. Sure enough there was no caterpillar to be seen anywhere, but it was not long before Jack called out: "He won't be far off, because here's the leaf he's been feeding on."

"A mere leaf-eater," said the Flower-Bud Caterpillar. "If you speak to *him* I'm afraid *I* shall have to retire."

"We would speak to him, of course, if we could see him," said Maggie, upon which the Flower-Bud Caterpillar retired, to do which he had only to say nothing, as there was no telling him from the flower-buds amongst which he lived.

Meanwhile Jack was looking at the leaf that he thought the caterpillar had been feeding on. "I'm sure he has," he said, "or at least that some caterpillar has, because, look how he's left it." He might well say so, because the leaf, which was a small green one, not so very different from leaves at home, though it

was certainly not any that Jack or Maggie knew, was almost all eaten away. The caterpillar, if it was one, had evidently been feeding down the midrib, and, all the way along, he had left little bits which still hung to it, and gave it a ragged appearance. It was funny that all these little bits of leaf were the same sort of shape, long and thin, like a little snip of something, with a funny sort of scoop out at one end—as if the scissors had almost cut the snip off before they quite had. It was a very odd way of eating, Jack thought, but he felt sure that the leaf had been eaten by a caterpillar.

“Only, as he’s gone,” he said, “we shall never find him unless he says where he is.”

“If he doesn’t,” said Maggie, “I think we had better go on, because I see some pretty flowers over there, and I should like to pick one.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed a voice, which seemed certainly to come from the leaf Jack was looking at, “so you’d like to pick one, would you?”

“I should like to see you first,” said Maggie, “if you’d only show yourself.”

“Show myself?” said the voice again. “Why, here I am, in full view.”

“Where?” said Jack, as he turned the leaf over, and then back again, which he had done once before. “You’re not on the leaf, you know.”

“Why, where can your eyes be?” the voice answered. “Not on the leaf, indeed! Why, I’m in the very middle of the midrib.”

“You don’t mean to say——” said Jack, as he felt with his finger along the midrib of the leaf, but the next second, almost, it was quite evident that that was just what the owner of the voice did mean to say, for,

all at once, there was a sort of wriggle, and one of the bits of gnawed leaf turned into a caterpillar. Yes, there could be no doubt about it, it was a small green caterpillar, but his shape and his colour were exactly like the pieces of leaf he had eaten out, and left hanging to the midrib. Of course he was not quite so thin, but it was not till Jack touched him that this difference was noticeable. He *looked* as thin—and as flat too—and the way he sat on the midrib, which had been bitten away from the rest of the leaf, was just the way in which some of the pieces of leaf stuck out from it.

"Well," said this wonderful little Caterpillar, "I suppose you'll admit that I'm on the leaf now."

"I never thought there could *be* such caterpillars," said Jack. "But there's one in England," he added, "that looks just like a piece of twig sticking out from a branch."

"Because *he* is like the twig," said the Caterpillar. "But he doesn't make twigs look like himself, I suppose."

"I suppose not," said Jack.

"You recognise the superiority, I hope," said the Caterpillar.

"I suppose it is cleverer to make things oneself," Jack admitted.

"It's the difference between being like and making a likeness," said the Caterpillar. "The one's art, but the other isn't."

"But it's clever of that caterpillar to tie flower-buds on to his spines," said Maggie, "and you can't say that it's not."

"Some mechanical ability," said the Caterpillar, in a lofty way, "I admit; but that isn't art either. The fact is, whilst I am an artist, he is a mere artisan."

"I wonder he lets you say so without contradicting you," said Maggie.

"I daresay he'd be afraid to, in any case," said the Caterpillar, "but living, as we do, in different countries, he could hardly——"

"Different countries!" cried Maggie.

"Certainly," said the Caterpillar. "I, I am proud to say, am a South American caterpillar, whilst he has to put up with Borneo for his habitat."

"What's the matter with Borneo?" asked Jack.

"It's not his fault, I know," said the Caterpillar, "but so it is. He was born there, and couldn't help it."

"But he's only just there," said Maggie.

"Just there," said the Caterpillar, "is Borneo. A little farther on, where those pretty flowers you were looking at are growing, is Africa. They've all got leaves, and you can hardly turn one of them without being in some country or other. The last will bring you to Australia, but that's at the end of a very long passage."

"I hope it's not too long," said Maggie, who had only one idea of a passage, and felt rather nervous about it.

"You should have thought of that before you came here," said the Caterpillar. "Now, of course, you're booked."

This gave both Jack and Maggie a very uncomfortable feeling, as though, if they stayed any longer talking to the Caterpillar, they would be late for some steamboat they had to catch—which is one of the most uncomfortable feelings there is. So they thought they had better say good-bye, and get on. "Though, if it comes to that," Maggie whispered to Jack, "I'm sure it's not real, and he doesn't mean it in the same way."

"It's the book that he means. We're in it, you

know," said Jack ; but still he felt restless and anxious to go, though he hadn't asked either this Caterpillar or any of the other ones anything about the moths or butterflies they were going to turn into—the conversations, and the things that had happened, had been quite different to what he had expected.

"Are you going?" said the Caterpillar suddenly.

"Yes, I think so," Maggie answered, "because—because I should like to see some of those countries, and——"

"You're sure it's not rude?" said the Caterpillar.

"Oh, I hope not," said Maggie, though she thought it an embarrassing question. "You see, there are such a lot of things to look at now we are here, and—and with all those countries to see—so, if you don't mind——"

"Oh, I don't mind," said the Caterpillar, "first because it's my feeding-time again, and, secondly, because there's no reason why I should, you know. So if you're sure I sha'n't think you rude, running off so suddenly——"

It seemed to Maggie that the Caterpillar was saying the kind of things to her that she should have said to him, and making her answer them instead of himself. It was a tiresome way of talking, she thought, and made the proper remarks sound less graceful. So, as she felt annoyed, she only said good-bye, without adding anything, and began to walk away, with Jack.

"Where are you going to, first?" asked the Caterpillar.

"To Africa, I think," replied Maggie. "I should like to pick one of those flowers."

"Well, I've just one thing to say," said the Caterpillar. "Take care that one of them doesn't pick you. That's all."

“Whatever do you mean by that?” asked Jack, looking round—but as the Caterpillar had turned his back, and was feeding, and didn’t make any answer, and as he had said that that was all, it was plain that there was nothing more to be learnt from him. So Jack and Maggie walked on toward the flowers that were in Africa.

CHAPTER VI

VERY SURPRISING ADVENTURES

JACK and Maggie walked on to the cluster of beautiful flowers that had so attracted them, especially Maggie, and, as they got nearer and nearer to them, they seemed to get prettier and prettier, so that they forgot about steamers, or passages, or being late for anything. As they went, they kept wondering what the Caterpillar—it had not told them its name, but they might have called it the Portrait Modelling Caterpillar—had meant by its last remark, and they both agreed that, after all they had seen, and being in a part of the world where such very funny things kept happening, they had both of them better be careful; though as for being picked by a flower, even if it were a caterpillar or butterfly that looked like one, they couldn't imagine how such a thing as that was to happen, and it didn't sound sensible.

"But, of course, it might be another kind of insect," Jack observed, "and it needn't be so good-natured as a butterfly or a caterpillar."

"But human beings can't be picked," said Maggie—"unless he meant picked out for a conversation."

"It didn't sound as if he meant that," said Jack. "It sounded like something disagreeable. Up till now," he continued, "we've only met harmless insects, and their being a little conceited, or even ever so conceited, doesn't matter—at any rate it doesn't do us any harm. But if we were to meet a really dangerous kind, like a hornet, or a real savage ant—and there are stinging

ants, you know — why, then it might really *be* dangerous, because, you see, we’re so small.”

Maggie agreed that it might be very unpleasant, but she didn’t think that even dangerous insects could really hurt them, first, because, though it seemed quite real, they were really only in a book, and then, because Jack had promised not to collect any insect, which ought to make even the unamiable ones grateful. “And I’m glad you have, Jack” she added, “because collecting a hornet large enough to put its sting right through one’s body wouldn’t be at all pleasant, even if one could do it.”

“I sha’n’t do it now, of course,” said Jack, “because, you see, I *have* promised. But as for what the Caterpillar meant, the best way is to be very careful.”

They had now got to the flowers, which were of many kinds and colours. Some they recognised, from having seen them in greenhouses, but most of them were ones they had never seen before, which made them all the more interesting to see now for the first time. They were all just like flowers, and quite innocent-looking, but, for all that, Jack and Maggie remembered what the Caterpillar had said, and peered about at them very cautiously. It was not till they felt quite certain it was a flower, that they ventured to touch one, and then only on the flower part itself, as it seemed just a little more possible that the stalk might be a caterpillar. But as flower after flower was touched, and nothing happened, they began to get bolder, and very soon it came to picking them in the usual way. There was something quite exciting in picking flowers that were as big or bigger than themselves, and, before many minutes were over, both Jack and Maggie had forgotten all about everything except the pleasure and

fun of it. Every flower, too, was as beautiful as it was big, or even more beautiful, and there was one in particular, of a beautiful rose-red colour, like an oleander, which Jack thought the handsomest he had ever seen. He was just going to pick it, when, all at once, there was a cry of terror from Maggie, who was quite hidden from him because of the size of the nosegays which they were both carrying. "Oh, Jack! Jack!" she screamed, "it's come true, and the flower *has* picked me. Do help me to get away."

Jack would have helped her, of course, but, at that very moment, he was picked himself, and this is how it happened. He had reached up to pull down the head of the flower, which stood higher than his own, and, as it bent, his body became pressed up against it. In an instant, four of the petals—at least they had seemed to be petals till then—flew forward, caught Jack tight round the waist, and lifted him into the air. He screamed out, just as Maggie had done (the same thing exactly had happened to her), and well they both might scream, for, as they struggled and tried to push themselves away, with their hands, what had looked like a flower turned into a spider that was coloured in exactly the same way, and its jaws, which were dreadful to look at now that they knew what they were, were wide open, and they found themselves staring into them and its beady black eyes, which were just behind them, and right on the top of the head—there were about half-a-dozen of them in a little circle, and they all had a most unpleasant expression. "How dare you!" cried Maggie. "Let me go, I tell you! You'll either put me down, or----" She couldn't think of how to end the sentence, and was rather surprised, but not a bit comforted, when the Spider did it for her by saying, "I'll eat you."



"I'll eat you," said the Spider

"Please don't," said Maggie; "you oughtn't to, you know, because——"

"Because what?" said the Spider.

"Because I didn't mean to—it's an accident," gasped Maggie.

"When I eat a butterfly," said the Spider, "it is always an accident—on the part of that butterfly."

"But I'm not a butterfly," said Maggie, "and that's why——"

"I don't know what you're doing here then," said the Spider, "though certainly you don't look like one. The taste, however, would be a surer criterion."

Maggie had ceased struggling, and was only crying, by this time, and Jack, who had had a very similar conversation with *his* spider, was in much the same state.

"However," the Spider continued, "I didn't say I *would* eat you, but only that I'd either put you down *or* eat you. I was finishing your sentence, you know, as you didn't seem able to."

"Please put me down then, sir," sobbed Maggie.

"If you call me 'sir,'" said the Spider, with such a look and in such a savage tone of voice that Maggie thought it was all over with her, "it will be the worse for you. Do you hear, sister? Such an outrage!"

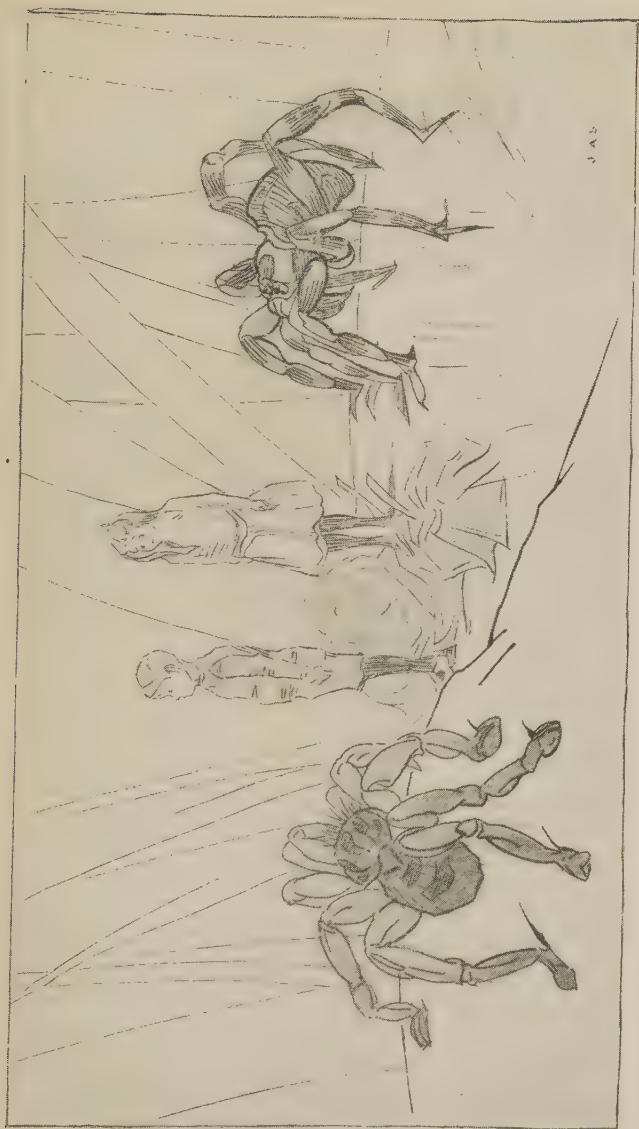
"It makes me quiver," said the other Spider, as she shook Jack till *he* quivered, several times in succession.

"My own palpi are violently agitated," said Maggie's Spider. "However, sister, the insult was not meant."

"I wish it were not felt," said Jack's Spider.

"I believe," said Maggie's Spider, as she examined Maggie more closely, "that mine is of the superior kind."

"I'm sure mine isn't," said Jack's, as she touched him



Jack and Maggie stood looking at them in a very timid way

all over with her palpi, which are the things a spider uses instead of antennæ; "the taint is apparent."

"Well, sister," said Maggie's Spider, who, of the two, seemed a little the less ferocious, "what do you say? Shall we put them down?"

"How am I to understand you, sister?" said Jack's Spider. "Do you mean on the ground, or——" and as she said "or" she pulled Jack right under her horrid hooked jaws, or falces, which seemed ready, every instant, to plunge into him, like a pair of sharp-pointed fish-hooks.

"I mean on the ground, sister," said Maggie's Spider, "and, on the whole, as they made a mistake and are not butterflies and don't belong here, perhaps it would be advisable. Do you concur?"

"Upon one condition," said Jack's Spider, "which is that, when here, they don't run away, but remain to hear what we can tell them. For, sister," she continued, "since we have decided not to eat them, the next best thing we can do is to raise them. Do you approve?"

"Undoubtedly," Maggie's Spider answered. "Our mission is to soften and elevate. I give my vote for that enlightened policy."

"They've got to promise first," said Jack's Spider. "Well," she continued, addressing both of them, "what do you say? If you promise, and then run away, it won't take us long to catch you—eight legs to two, you know. If you don't promise, well, you're caught already, and can be eaten at once."

So Jack and Maggie both promised, and, as soon as they had, they were put down on the ground, each in front of their own Spider. They stood looking up at them in a very timid way, and not feeling, in the least degree, comfortable. In fact they found it very difficult

to prevent themselves running away, but the Spiders looked, if anything, a little bigger than they were, and each of their eight legs was longer than either of theirs. So they stood still, for nothing, of course, could be meaner, or more dishonourable, than to break a promise after it had once been given.

"Well," said one of the Spiders—the one that had picked Jack—after a pause, during which they had all four looked at each other, "I suppose you're both of you longing to know how this wonderful resemblance, on the part of my sister and myself, to two very beautiful flowers, has been brought about; also, why it has."

Somehow, now, the two Spiders did not seem so much like two flowers to Jack and Maggie as they had before (perhaps because their natures were so different) but more like two severe professorial persons, each sitting upon a sort of tribunal, on purpose to lecture them—and this would have made them feel very uncomfortable if they had not felt still more uncomfortable before. However, they did not say this, and the Spider continued, "In fact, you wish to become acquainted with the philosophy of the subject?"

"Its inner meaning," remarked the Spider that had picked Maggie.

"I bow to my erudite sister," said Jack's Spider.

"I was not correcting you, sister," Maggie's Spider explained. "Both expressions are adequate."

"The philosophy and inner meaning of the whole subject," Jack's Spider continued. "Is that what you're dying to hear?"

"If it wouldn't be troubling you—madam," said Maggie, who was really (and so was Jack) dying to get away.

"By no means," the Spider answered. "As I said before, our mission is to raise and instruct."

"We represent beauty combined with intelligence," said Maggie's Spider.

"And firmness," said Jack's, with a plunge of her falces which made both children jump.

"General superiority, in fact," said Maggie's Spider. "Firmness is included."

"It stands first," said Jack's Spider. "Examples may be given later—our husbands, you know."¹ (This was half aside to Maggie's Spider, only Jack heard it, he was so near.)

"Do you think they'll be here in time?" said Maggie's Spider, in an anxious tone of voice.

"Nay, sister, with *our* attractions," said the other, and then added, in an undertone, "However, if not, here are two."

"True—true," said Maggie's Spider, "we can make them examples, of course."

"First, however, it is our duty to acquaint them with the general principles of the subject," said Jack's Spider. "Theory first, then practice." And as she said this she put herself into a very active attitude, as if she was going to leap.

"Begin, sister," said Maggie's Spider, with a polite motion of her palpi towards the other, who made a similar motion with hers, and said, "After you, sister."

"I defer to superior merit," said Maggie's Spider.

"My principle exactly," said Jack's.

"Nay, sister," said Maggie's Spider.

¹ She *meant* that they would eat their husbands, which is customary with spiders. Luckily Jack did not understand the allusion. How *could* he?

“But it was you, you know, who proposed putting them down,” said Jack’s Spider.

“I admit that,” said Maggie’s Spider, “but the lecture was *your* very brilliant idea.”

“Well then,” said Jack’s Spider, “shall we both speak together—distinctly, of course, and in time?”

“Unfortunately,” Maggie’s Spider answered, “we have to say different things, being, as you know, sister, of different species, though united in great leading principles.”

“I recognise the difficulty you raise, sister,” said Jack’s Spider. “We should only confuse them. Well, then, shall we put it to the vote?—for we *have* votes,” she added, with sudden ferocity, “however much *you* may object to it.” She looked full at Jack, as she said this, who had nothing to say in reply—it wasn’t that, but the spiders themselves, he objected to, only, of course, he couldn’t tell her so.

“I bow to your ruling, sister,” said Maggie’s Spider, “so now let’s get on.”

But as the Spiders voted for each other—they were so very polite—and as Jack and Maggie voted each for the one that had caught them, because, as they stood right in front of that one, they were just a little more frightened of it than of the other, the votes were equal and the difficulty remained just as great as ever. Jack and Maggie were beginning to hope that, as neither of the Spiders would speak first, and they couldn’t speak together, there would be no speaking at all, and that perhaps they would be told to go, but, all at once, Jack’s Spider, after looking at him very savagely, said, in a voice that was not at all flowerlike, “Now answer me, for I *will* know. *Are* you vile or exalted?” As he didn’t seem, to himself, to be either, and didn’t understand what was

meant, this was not a question which Jack could answer, and when the Spider, looking still more ferocious, said, "Come, out with it—high or low?" he was as much in the dark as ever, and a little bit more nervous than before. "Please, madam," he began, "I should think I was somewhere——"

"Don't trifle with our feelings," said the Spider, "or we'll soon show you where you are. Are you the female or the male? That's what I mean."

"I'm a boy," said Jack.

"He admits it," said the Spider triumphantly. "My sensations did not deceive me. And you?" she continued much more affably, and looking at Maggie, who, of course, said she was a girl.

"I thought so," said the Spider. "Then each of us has her own class, and we can take them in their natural order. Ladies first, I *think*, sister," on which the other Spider—the one who had Maggie for a class—smiled in a curious way and said, "On *that* point, sister, we are not likely to disagree. Well, then, to business. You may listen too, if you like," she said, turning to Jack. "Each class, by this method, has the privilege of hearing what is said to the other." She then called out, "Attention!" fixed all her eyes upon Maggie, and in a very class-roomy tone of voice—just as if she was giving a lecture—began as follows: "You have, no doubt, been at a loss, you and your young companion—unhappily a brother——"

"A sister would have been much better," said Jack's Spider. "However, he looks almost as tender."

"Hush, sister," said Maggie's Spider. "We'll settle that afterwards. You have no doubt, I say, been at a loss to account for the simulated identity of certain specific forms, representative of this or that order and family,

with others widely remote from them in the true scheme of classification ; as, for instance, of lepidopterous with hymenopterous, reptilian, or even foliaceous types, or of true *arachnidæ* with spurious floral examples. Am I right in my surmise ? ”

Maggie said, “ Yes,” though she was just a little doubtful as to whether she had quite understood what the Spider meant. There were some words that rather puzzled her, but she thought “ Yes ” was the right answer to such a question, and the Spider looked pleased, which showed that it was.

“ Well,” said the Spider, “ my business is to make it all clear. The key is not far to seek ; cryptic adaptation to need and environment will explain the whole thing. Now be attentive,” she continued, “ so as properly to understand what I say. Clarity of conception will be best attained by a brief exposition of the subject in its entirety : as, for instance, such adaptation may be, firstly, *pigmatic*, in which division are included *apatetic*, *sematic* and *epigamic* coloration. Under the first, again, we are to distinguish the *anticryptic*, *procryptic* and *pseudosematic* branches, under the second the *apo*- and *epi*-*sematic*, which we may treat as sub-sections, whilst the third is unsubdivided, thus greatly adding to the simplicity of the scheme. You follow me ? ”

Maggie said “ Yes ” again, though she was quite sure, by this time, that she didn’t know one bit, what the Spider was talking about. But she thought that, perhaps, to follow someone, when they were speaking, might mean to listen to them, as well as to understand them, in which case she was speaking the truth—and besides, she was afraid to say “ No.”

“ I am glad I have made it all clear,” said the Spider. “ Then perhaps you are now in a position to tell me

whether my worthy sister and myself are examples of aggressive or merely protective resemblance?"

"Oh, aggressive, I think, madam," said Maggie, for she did know what that word meant, and she thought that both the Spiders had been horribly aggressive.

"Quite right, child," said the Spider, "very creditable indeed. You see, sister"—and she turned to the other one—"I have an apt pupil."

"More so than mine is, I fear," said Jack's Spider. "His attention has been wandering, I feel certain."

"Perhaps you had better examine him, sister," said Maggie's Spider. "He was exhorted to listen, and discipline should be maintained."

"I shall know how to do that," the other Spider answered, and then, looking very severely—not to say savagely—at Jack, she said, "Put into ordinary English what my sister has been expounding in words of scientific precision."

Jack had not "followed" any more of what the Spider had been saying than Maggie had, but he understood the last question, too, and he knew what the lecture had been about. Besides, the Spider had begun by saying what it was that Maggie and himself had been at a loss to account for, and of course he knew that, in ordinary English, very well; so he thought that, in that kind of way, he might be able to say what he had been told to, pretty well; and besides he had to—or at least to try—which was the most important consideration. So he said: "Please, madam, it was about our being surprised because some insects look like other insects that they're not really, or like other animals that aren't insects at all, or like leaves or flowers, when they're really only butterflies or caterpillars, or—or spiders, madam; and they're like that because it's useful to

them, and sometimes it prevents them from being eaten themselves, because they seem to be a leaf, or a snake, or a flower, or a butterfly that isn't eaten, because it's nasty, and sometimes they can eat other insects because of it, because they look like a flower, and butterflies and things come and settle on them ; and when it's like that it's aggressive, because then they attack things, but, when they only don't get eaten themselves, it's protective, because they're protected from getting eaten—and please, madam, you're the aggressive kind."

"We are," said the Spider, "and thus raised immeasurably above those who owe their paltry existence to a mere passive power of deception. Always distinguish the protective, or *procryptic*, from the *anticryptic*, in which a higher artistic expression conduces to a yet higher end—that of aggression, namely, which lies at the root of all that is grand and imperial. Now what have I been saying?" she continued sharply. "Repeat in simple language, and let it be a less slovenly affair than the last, *or*——" The Spider didn't say what, but only added, "Don't be nervous."

"Please, madam," said Jack, who couldn't help feeling a little nervous, in spite of having been told not to be, "I think what you mean is that it's much—much grander for one thing to——"

"Don't call us things," said the Spider ; "beings, if you please."

"That it's much grander," Jack began again, "for one being to—to take in another being, so as to eat him, than only so as not to get eaten by him."

"Somewhat crude, is it not, sister?" said the Spider, "but the meaning has evidently been grasped. To 'take in,' however, is vulgar, and not sufficiently explicit. Define the nature of the deception to which you allude."

"Oh, what we've been talking about, madam," said Jack; "looking like what's not good to eat or what won't be noticed, so that you're let alone, or else like something that butterflies or other things like, and then you catch what comes to it—and the first's called protective resemblance and the second's aggressive resemblance, and when one butterfly's like another, that's mimicry."

"Mimicry," said the Spider, "may come under either of those headings. I should define it as a branch of *pseudosematic* coloration in general, under which heading are included both the *pseudaposematic* and *pseudepise-matic* divisions. Would you like to put *that* into ordinary language?"

"I'm afraid I can't, madam," said Jack, "because I don't know what it means."

"Why, it just means deceptive appearances," said the Spider, "which you must have heard of, and one way of having them is to look like something nice, and another to look like something nasty. For instance, we look like flowers, whilst *Papilio*, etc., whom you may remember, look like a nasty butterfly, with bitter juices. Nice and nasty, that's what it really means, only, if you put it into six syllables and a foreign language, you'll be more highly thought of, and may rise to great honour, in time. So try to remember *pseudaposematic* and *pseudepise-matic*."

"Not forgetting *pseudosematic* also," said the other Spider, "which, though it's only five syllables, includes both the one and the other—seventeen in all."

"I won't if I can help it," said Jack, "but——"

"You mean perhaps you might," said Maggie's Spider (which showed how good she was at grasping one's meaning). "Sister, we must not overburden their

minds. The simplest plan,” she continued, turning to Jack again, “would be this—remember *us* as nice examples and the others as nasty ones.”

“But then, if there are other creatures who imitate flowers——” said Maggie, who felt that this would not be quite fair.

“Why, how you argue, child!” exclaimed the Spider quite pleasantly. “You quite drive me into a corner. Well, then, remember us as the two nicest, since you will have it so. There, that’s simple, isn’t it?”

This was not what Maggie had meant at all, but the Spider looked much too pleased to be contradicted—indeed she would hardly have ventured to do so at any time—and, just as she was searching about for the right thing to say, a tall flower at her side, which she had not noticed before, saved her the trouble of saying anything by remarking, “Intolerable!” She was so surprised that she forgot all about the Spiders, for a little, and could only stare at the new flower, which still seemed to be one, although it could evidently make remarks.

“It did say something, didn’t it?” she asked Jack, who was staring as hard as she was, for he had heard it too.

“Say something indeed!” said the flower, or what looked like one, “I said ‘Intolerable!’ and I always do say it, or something equally trenchant, when they get to that point, because then they’re near enough to hear me, and it has an immediate effect. They never say anything after that, or do anything either. They’re afraid to move almost.”

“Are they?” said Maggie, feeling very much relieved.

“Why, look at them,” said the voice (and indeed both the Spiders were trembling very much), “I’m big enough to eat both of them, and strong enough too, so

they're afraid of me, which makes them cowards and me brave."

"I don't know about that," said Jack.

"I adopt accepted modes of thought," said the voice, "and so save a world of trouble."

"But if you can eat them," said Jack, "why don't you?"

"You see, there's a difficulty," the voice answered, "because, though we're both in the same line—the flower-trap business, you know—yet they're in Africa, and I'm in the Malay Peninsula. We've a different habitat, in fact, and one can't live in one country and take one's meals in another. If one only could——"

"But you seem so close together," said Maggie.

"That makes it all the more tantalising," said the voice; "to have a good dinner under one's very nose, as it were, and yet not to be able to eat it because it's in Africa!"

"Then I wonder they're frightened," said Maggie. "But what creature are you, please?" she added, "and would you mind moving?"

"Impossible," said the voice, "unless a fly or a butterfly or something were to settle on me. You'd soon see then—or if *you* were just to step over. You're in Africa too, now, you know."

This remark did not make a good impression on either Jack or Maggie. They determined to stay in Africa, but as that seemed to be just in front of the two Spiders, whilst the Malay Peninsula, with some other *aggressive* creature, was just behind them, their position was not at all a comfortable one. Luckily, however, the two Spiders were now quite subdued, and as for the lecture, it had come entirely to an end.

"Meanwhile," the voice continued, "I will endeavour

to explain myself. What I look like is a pretty pink flower (as you see), known as the Straits Rhododendron, but what I am is a mantis."

"A mantis?" said Maggie. "That is a funny name—rather a pretty one, though," she added.

"Oh yes, I know," said Jack, "those things that have a body that looks like a large green leaf, and legs like so many little ones. They're called Praying Mantises, because they sit almost upright, with their bodies bent forward and their first pair of legs held up as if they were praying."

"For our dinner, of course," said the Mantis (for this was what the voice had turned out to be), "and very thankful we are when we get it."

"But *you* don't look like a leaf," said Jack, staring at what seemed one of several pink and white flowers, with a bud just opening beside it, "because——"

"Because *I* am not a Leaf Mantis," said the Mantis, with emphasis. "There is a higher division of the family, which simulates flowers, and at the head of this I stand. I am the Flower Mantis—the Malays call me a *sendudok*, and even say that I am one."

"Is that their name for the flower you look like?" asked Maggie.

"Precisely," the Flower Mantis answered. "They say I am a *sendudok* come to life. No higher testimony, perhaps, could be given to the excellence of my art."

"But flowers are alive," said Maggie, "so it's not right, what the Malays say."

"What they mean is that a flower has changed into a mantis without altering," the Flower Mantis explained. "No more striking tribute could—however, I said that before. Well, and what do you think of these *sendudoks* that I so closely resemble?"

"Oh, I think they're lovely flowers," said Maggie with enthusiasm—for indeed they were some of the handsomest she had ever seen.

"I agree with you cordially," said the Flower Mantis. "It would not, in my opinion, be easier to find a more exquisitely beautiful flower than a sendudok" (a speech which *almost* sounded conceited, for it was just as if a sendudok had made it).

All this time Jack was wishing that something would happen to make the Flower Mantis move, because, as it was, it was just like talking to a flower, so that he could not see what he was really like. So when, at last, he noticed a fine handsome moth—a day-flier—hovering about over the sendudoks, and settling, now on one, and now on another, he felt very interested, and it was not long before the moth settled just where he wanted it to. Instantly, the seeming flower sprang into life, its pink petals, that had looked so innocent, turned out to be legs, and one pair of them (they were the upper ones), shooting forward, caught the moth between the sharp edges of their two first joints, which were now bent together like the blades of a pair of scissors. At the same time, what had seemed a small flower-bud by the side of the large open flower, dropped suddenly down and became the abdomen of the Flower Mantis. Now that he had changed his attitude, he didn't look really like a flower, or a cluster of flowers, any more, or, at least, not nearly so much, but, as he still had the pink and white colouring of one, he still looked very pretty, as well as a very interesting insect.

But what interested Jack the most was the way the moth was being eaten. It was still held fast between those soft-looking, pink, petal-like things which were really the different parts of the Mantis's forelegs, and

not only hard, but as sharp, at their edges, as razors. The moth's body had been cut half through, so that one of his wings was lying on the ground. As for the rest of him, it was rapidly disappearing, for the Mantis kept biting out first one little bit with his sharp little pointed jaws—for his head was quite small—and then another, as soon as he had eaten that.

"It *is* interesting," said Jack, feeling quite scientific (nothing makes one feel more scientific than watching something of the kind).

"I think it's horribly cruel," said Maggie—"and most disgusting. The poor moth! Just think what it must be suffering! To be torn to pieces, and eaten, and alive all the while! Oh, I *do* think——"

"*Please* don't let's have any sentiment," said the Moth irritably (much to Maggie's surprise). "Quite unnecessary, I assure you. Suffering?—not at all. We don't feel it here, because, you see, it's all upon paper."

"Do you mean to say," said Maggie, "that you don't mind——"

"Not I," said the Moth. "Why should I? It's nature, you know."

"I suppose it is," Maggie admitted, "but then, so are a lot of horrid things."

"Oh, come now, don't let us be morbid," said the Moth, just as another piece of him disappeared down the Mantis's throat. "A bracing tone of mind is what I try to cultivate."

"I think it's very brave of you," Jack couldn't help saying, "only, of course, if it really doesn't hurt——"

"Not at all—on the contrary," said the Moth. "Quite otherwise, I assure you."

"But you come to an end anyhow," said Maggie, who felt as if she must be sympathetic.

"I should be sorry to think *that*," said the Moth gravely,—“a dreadful idea, to be sure!”

“But—but—there isn't much left of you,” said Maggie timidly—for she didn't want to wound his feelings.

“Not here,” said the Moth faintly (his strength was evidently failing him). “With the present page I have, it is true, well-nigh done, but there is another beyond it, and I hope I shall find it a better one.”

“Oh, of course, if you come in again farther on, Mr Moth,” said Jack, who began to understand what he meant.

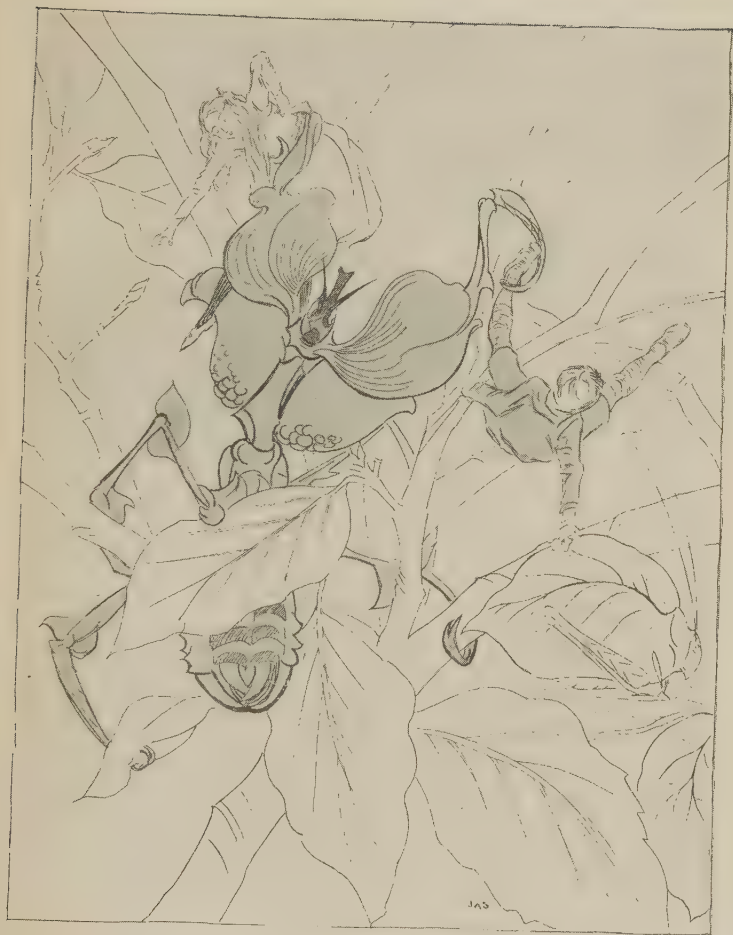
“It would be rather hard if I were not to,” said the Moth, “after a first experience of this sort. Why, I haven't been described, even, yet. But I am resigned,” he continued, with a placid expression. “My firm hope is in a future chapter, and I *know* that I shall come together again at the end, in a plate.”

“I wish you would now,” said the Mantis, “but I must put up with things as they are.”

“I don't think that *you've* anything to complain of,” said the Moth.

“Not much, perhaps,” said the Mantis, “but the arrangement you speak of would have suited me better here—and now. In a plate—so convenient. However, I can do without luxuries.” As the Flower Mantis made this last remark he finished the Moth.

This conversation, between one insect that was being eaten, and another that was eating him, struck both Jack and Maggie as very remarkable, so remarkable, indeed, that, without thinking what they were doing, they began to come a little nearer, and then a little nearer still, so that, by the time conversation and dinner were both exhausted, they found themselves quite close to the Flower Mantis.



Those "predatory legs" made a sudden sweep forward, . . . immediately
Maggie was in one of them and Jack in the other

Then, in a moment, those "predatory legs" (as they are called) of his, which were now free, made a sudden sweep forward, and when they went back again, which was almost immediately, Maggie was in one of them and Jack in the other.

They both screamed and struggled, of course, but screaming and struggling were of no use, and all would soon have been over if Jack, as he hung head downwards—for *he* had been seized by the foot—had not happened to catch hold of a leaf—a nice green one—which he saw just beside him.

"It's no use pulling me like that," said the leaf. "That may make me loose, but not you. I dislike rough treatment, but if you turn me gently you'll be in Nicaragua in no time, and he can't eat you there any more than in Africa, for it's not his habitat either. Quick now! and mind you don't tear me."

Of course Jack was not long in taking the excellent advice offered him. He turned over the leaf as quickly as ever he could, though taking care to do it gently, as well. The next moment the Flower Mantis, as well as the two Spiders, were gone, and the landscape and general surroundings were not at all what they had been. In fact, it was quite a New World.

CHAPTER VII

JACK AND MAGGIE HAVE THEIR LIVES SAVED

“**W**HAT are you looking about for, Jack?” asked Maggie, after the warmth of their first sensations at not being eaten by the Mantis had had time to cool down a little.

“Oh, it’s the leaf,” said Jack. “It was him, you know—that is, I mean it was it—I suppose a leaf is ‘it,’” he added reflectively, “even when it does speak to one.”

“Oh yes, but go on, Jack,” said Maggie, who, having been caught right side up, had not had Jack’s experience, and so did not know the obligations she was under. “What leaf?”

“Why, the one that I caught hold of and that told me to turn it over, and then we should be somewhere else, and so I did, and now we are, only I forget where it was,” answered Jack. “We ought to say ‘thank you,’ you know.”

“Yes, of course we must,” said Maggie. “I should think so—if only we can find it,” she added, “because there are leaves everywhere.”

She might well say so, for they seemed now to be in another great forest very like the one in which they had first seen the Great Morpho Butterfly, and, besides the leaves on the trees, which, of course, were innumerable, thousands of others lay scattered about on the ground.

“Only it was such a fine green one,” said Jack, “and, instead of lying flat on one side, it seemed to be standing up on one of its edges, because I don’t think

it was fixed to a tree, and then it had two long things like antennæ—if it had been an insect instead of a leaf—coming out where its stalk was, and—— Oh, look there!” he cried, all of a sudden. “Do look!”

Maggie looked where Jack was pointing in the greatest excitement, for there, only a little way off, was the very leaf that had spoken to him, and which he recognised again, somehow, though he hardly knew how, amidst all the other leaves and debris which strewed the floor of the great tropical forest they now stood in.

“Oh, Mr Leaf,” he cried gratefully, “I know who you are—at least I know it was you who told me. Oh!”—and he stopped all of a sudden.

“Well?” said the Leaf. It was very funny, but he certainly did seem to have a pair of antennæ.

“I tell you what it is, Maggie,” Jack continued—his eyes had become sharper by this time; in fact, he was getting the real entomological eye—“I don’t believe it is a leaf, really. It’s like the Leaf Butterfly, only, instead of a butterfly, it’s a sort of large green grasshopper, this time.”

“Hist!” said the Leaf, or the Grasshopper, whichever it was. “Pray, don’t betray me. I have reasons for passing incognito.”

“Have you, sir?” said Maggie (she understood the word, though Jack didn’t, because it came in in her modern history). “Have you really?”—she felt interested in him at once.

“Very pressing ones, I assure you. Oh, most cogent,” was the Grasshopper’s answer (for he really was a grasshopper, after all). “The pursuers are close on my track. Were you to betray me—but my secret is safe in your hands.”

“Oh yes, sir, I should *think* so,” said Maggie.

“We wouldn’t tell anyhow,” said Jack, “but after what you did for us, you know——”

“True; I can trust you,” said the Grasshopper. “Hist! they are coming—they are near.”

“Hadn’t you better keep still, and not speak, sir?” said Maggie, for the Grasshopper was not only moving about now, but indulging in a good deal of gesture. Even after he had said, “Hist! not a word more,” and gone back to his place (which was a well-chosen one), yet he didn’t stay there, but soon came out and said, “Hist!” again. Indeed, he said it several times; it was a funny, shrill little note, very much like a chirrup, Jack thought.

“What is it now, sir?” asked Maggie, and Jack was beginning with “I really think——”

“Hist!” said the Grasshopper once more (just as if *he* hadn’t been speaking all the time). “They are almost upon me. Hark! Listen! Would you like to lay your ear to the ground?”

“I will, if you would like me to,” said Maggie. (Jack was already on his knees.)

“No matter, they are here,” said the Grasshopper, and then he went on very hurriedly, “I saved both your lives. Save mine. Wouldst know how? Listen. My name is Leaf-Grasshopper. Ignore it, know me only as Mr Green-Leaf. Enough. I can trust you. No more.” And, to Maggie’s great relief, he really did say no more after that, but, going stealthily back to where he had been standing before, amidst some fallen twigs and branches, remained there, quite silent and motionless, looking just like a leaf upon one of them.

Almost before he got there, the whole ground was covered by a great army of enormous brown ants—for

both Jack and Maggie were certain that that was what they were, although they had never seen ants like them in England. Their shape, indeed, was the usual kind that ants are of, but they had longer necks and much larger heads, with enormous, long, crescent-shaped jaws. They were so near to the Leaf-Grasshopper (or Mr Green-Leaf, as he wished to be called), before he had stopped walking about, that (unless it was because he walked stealthily) Jack and Maggie could only account for their not seeing him by supposing that their eyesight was bad; and, the next moment, several had crawled right over him and were continuing on their way. Evidently—for their intentions were obviously hostile—they didn't know him, but only took him for a leaf.

"It's not much wonder either," whispered Jack to Maggie (for he didn't want the ants to hear him). "He's as like a leaf as the Leaf-Butterfly was."

This was true, only the Leaf-Grasshopper was like a green leaf, instead of a withered one. He had a mark, too, all down the centre of each of his broad green wing-cases—for it was these and not his wings that caused the resemblance—that looked just like the midrib and, on each side of it there were lines and markings exactly the same as the veinings of a leaf. His head was so small, in comparison with the rest of him, that it might very well have been a bit of the leaf's stalk, and the long antennæ were so thin and slender that it was quite easy not to notice them. The wonder, perhaps, was that Jack had noticed and thought about them, but that only shows what it is to have an entomological eye.

All this time the ants were getting more and more numerous, and it was all Jack and Maggie could do, to avoid them, by running and dodging and getting behind things, and, in fact, taking a great deal of trouble.

They marched in a great, broad column, and were not turned aside by anything, so that when they came to a tree—which, as it was a forest, they did very often—they just climbed up it, however high it was, and down on the opposite side. Then, too—which made it much more difficult to avoid them—detachments were sent out, right and left, on each side of the column, and went hurrying and scurrying in every direction.

Wherever they went, clouds of insects and other things rushed or flew out before them, endeavouring to make their escape, but this was not easy, for there were ants almost everywhere, and wherever a fly or a butterfly came down—for they soon got tired of flying and wanted to settle—it was sure to be seized by one or more of them. When the ants caught any creature (which was every moment) they did not eat it at once, but carried it off, as booty, and, if it was too large to be carried whole, they pulled it to pieces, and each went off with a bit. There were numbers of spiders in the forest, and these would set off running, with their long legs, as fast as ever they could. But it was no use, for there were ants on every leaf and stick that they ran over, and when they put down a foot, it was often into the middle of a group of them, so that that foot would be caught. They might go on running, for a little, with an ant or two hanging to it, but, as other feet were caught by other ants, they had to go slower and slower, until, at last, they were caught altogether. This was the fate of even the largest spiders, who might perhaps kill a score or so of ants before they were overpowered—the smaller ones were soon disposed of.

Even the strong-flying insects, who could go ever so far without having to rest, did not always escape death, though it came in another way, for the ant army was

attended by an army of birds which hung above them on purpose to catch all that flew up. In fact, it was a scene of wholesale destruction, and if Jack and Maggie had not managed to get under something (they could never remember what) and hold it down very tightly over them, which no other creature had thought of doing, they would have been caught and eaten too; but, all the time, the Leaf-Grasshopper stood safe in the very midst of the army, because he passed incognito as Mr Green-Leaf. Hundreds and hundreds—perhaps thousands and thousands—of ants passed over him, without suspecting who he really was.

At length, somehow, it was all over, the ants had marched on, leaving the forest depopulated, and, as soon as it was safe for him to move again, the hero of this wonderful escape left his retreat, and, coming up to Jack and Maggie, grasped them warmly by the hand.

"You have saved my life," he said.

"I don't know so much about that," said Jack. "You see we had no time for speaking, and, besides, we couldn't have said anything without being eaten ourselves."

"Besides," added Maggie, "it would have been just the same, I suppose, if we hadn't been here."

"Not the slightest doubt of it," assented the Leaf-Grasshopper. "Exactly the same, of course."

"Then why do you just *pretend* we've saved your life?" said Maggie, feeling a little disappointed.

"Why, I saved yours, you know," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "and that's the only way to make it even. Henceforth we are quits."

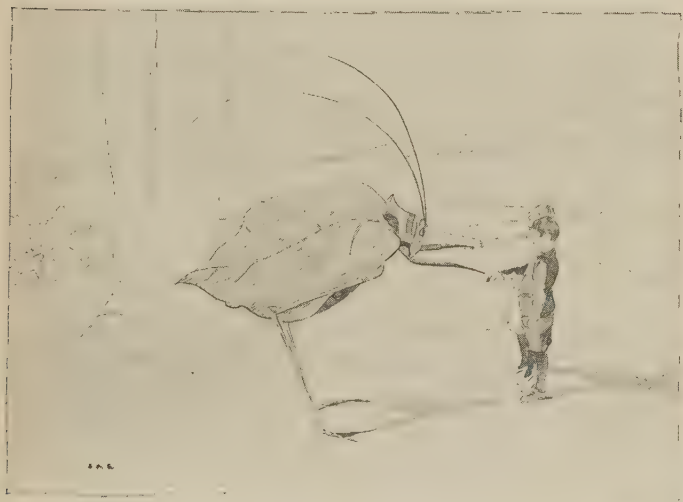
He said this just as if he was on the stage, and Maggie began to think that, what with disguises and pretending to be another person, his head was turned.

"I think he's a very queer sort of insect," she said aside to Jack, who agreed with her.

"You see it now, don't you?" said the Leaf-Grasshopper. "It was your cue, you know."

"What was?" said Maggie.

"Why, to save mine, to be sure," said the Leaf-



"You have saved my life"

Grasshopper. "The dramatic necessities lay entirely in that direction."

"But it isn't a play," said Maggie (though somehow she kept feeling as if it was one).

"You see, if you hadn't," the Leaf-Grasshopper continued, "the situation would have been tame. The romantic interest is now much strengthened."

"Oh, it's all very well, you know," said Jack, who

began to get impatient, "but as we didn't really save your life, it isn't true, and so——"

"Pray don't destroy the illusion," said the Leaf-Grasshopper earnestly.

"Oh, he's cracked, *I* think," said Maggie to herself, and then she added aloud, "I wish you wouldn't talk so—so funnily, Mr Leaf-Grasshopper."

"Hist!" said the Leaf-Grasshopper, just as if the ants were coming back again, "Mr Green-Leaf still, if you please. I shall not throw off the incognito. In fact"—here he lowered his voice mysteriously, and continued, after a slight pause—"I have a secret to confide."

"What is it, Mr Green-Leaf?" asked Maggie, lowering her voice too—it seemed so very important.

"The fact is," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "*I cannot* throw it off."

"The incognito, sir?" said Maggie.

"Exactly," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "it clings to me. *I have* to pass under it. Though really Mr Leaf-Grasshopper, I must always pass as Mr Green-Leaf."

"It does seem funny," said Maggie, not knowing exactly what to say.

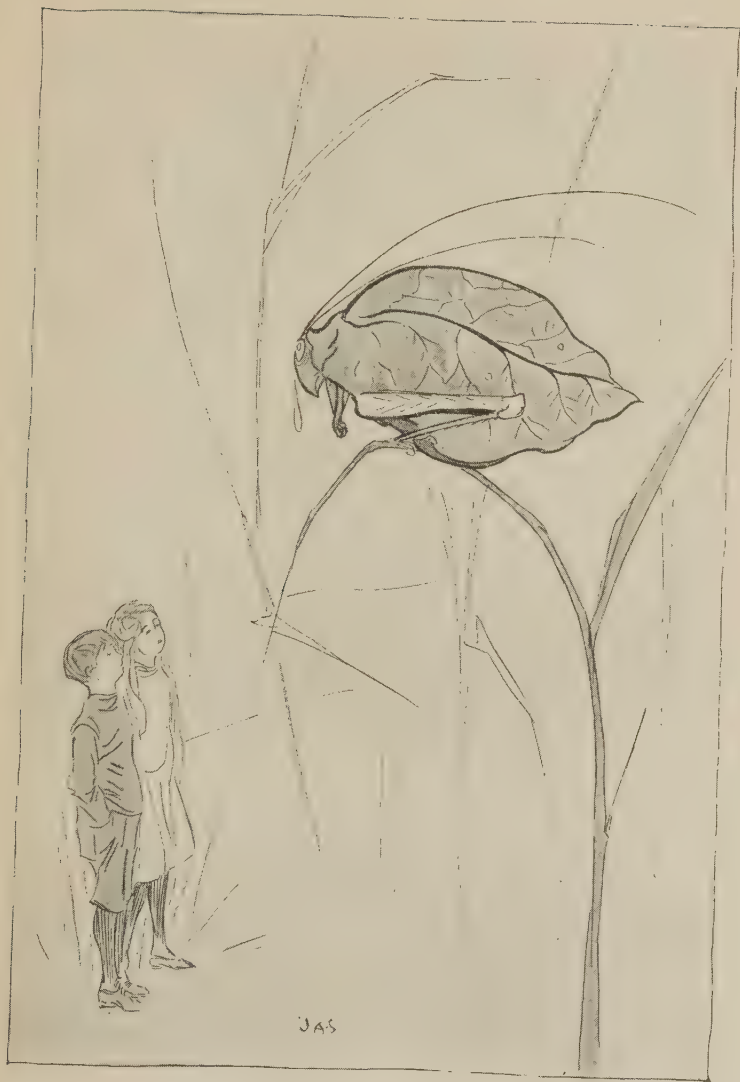
"Such," continued the Leaf-Grasshopper, "is the tragedy of my life."

"Of course if that's how you feel about it, sir," said Maggie, "but——"

"Why, how would you feel," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "if you were always misinterpreted? You wouldn't like to pass as a cabbage, I suppose?"

"Oh no," said Maggie, "but then——"

"Well, it's much the same thing," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "because *I know*, all the time, that I belong to the animal kingdom."



“You see the pathos of it, don’t you?”

"But it's very useful to you, isn't it, Mr Green-Leaf?" said Jack.

"It is *in-dis-pen-sable*," said the Leaf-Grasshopper. "That is the saddest part of it."

"Oh!" said Jack.

"You see," the Leaf-Grasshopper explained, "I *must* deceive. I can't help it. Oh, it *is* hard. To be always having to play a part, and yet to be quite genuine—as I am! Oh, if you only knew how genuine I *feel* through it all! You see the pathos of it, don't you?"

Jack didn't, somehow—perhaps he was not old enough—and even Maggie, though she tried to feel sympathetic, hardly knew how to, it all seemed so funny. "But does nobody know?" she said at last.

"None but the members of my own family," replied the Leaf-Grasshopper. "A private circle—do you call *that* fame? To the world I am nothing."

"Yes; Mr Green-Leaf, you know," said Jack.

"Worse than nothing—a vegetable!" said the Leaf-Grasshopper bitterly. "None know me," he continued, in a tone of the deepest dejection. "All are imposed upon—all."

"It's because you do it so well, you know, Mr Green-Leaf," said Maggie soothingly.

"That," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, who seemed determined not to be soothed, "but adds to the irony. If they *knew* I was acting, I should receive the applause that is due to me. Fame would be mine. As it is, I am quite unrecognised. My art is *too* natural."

Both Jack and Maggie began to feel quite uncomfortable at the Leaf-Grasshopper's seeming to be so unhappy—especially as he had saved their lives. They tried hard to think of some way to console him, and at last Jack said: "But after all, Mr Lea—Mr Green-Leaf,

you can walk about, you know—perhaps you can fly too——”

“Of course I can,” interjected the Leaf-Grasshopper.

“And then you’ve got a long pair of antennæ,” Jack continued, “and legs, and one can see those when you walk—and so, whenever you really don’t want to be thought a leaf, you needn’t be, you know; and besides, you can talk, too, which a leaf can’t.”

“So you needn’t keep still and look like a leaf, unless it’s dangerous not to,” said Maggie—“I mean if you don’t want to,” she added.

“Perhaps not,” said the Leaf-Grasshopper, “but then I do want to.”

“But I thought you didn’t like it,” said Maggie, surprised (as Jack was too) at this answer.

“Why, of course I don’t,” said the Leaf-Grasshopper. “Haven’t I told you so?”

“But not to like doing a thing, and yet to want to do it, too, seems rather curious,” said Maggie.

“No doubt,” answered the Leaf-Grasshopper, “but then, you see, *I’m* curious.”

“I suppose you are, Mr Green-Leaf,” said Jack, “but I don’t see how that explains it.”

“Complex, perhaps, I should have said,” said the Leaf-Grasshopper. “That does, of course.”

“I don’t see how,” said Jack.

“*You* don’t,” said the Leaf-Grasshopper, “because *you’re* simple, you know. When one’s simple,” he added—for Jack didn’t seem quite satisfied—“one doesn’t understand things, but when one’s complex then one does.”

“But how can one possibly want to do something when one would rather not do it?” said Jack.

“I can explain it if you’d like me to,” said the Leaf-Grasshopper.

"Oh, please, if you would, Mr Green-Leaf," said Maggie.

"Very well," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "but first, let me ask you a question. Did you ever feel like two persons?"

"Two persons!" exclaimed Maggie in surprise.

"At the same time, of course, I mean," the Leaf-Grasshopper explained, as if he were making it easier.

"Why of course not," said Jack, and Maggie added, "I've never even heard of such a thing."

"Ah!" said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "I suspected—I may say I was sure of it. Then how," he continued, "are *you* to comprehend *me*? I, as I told you, am not simple, but complex. I am divided, I lead a double life; there is the grasshopper part of me, and the leaf part of me, and both strive and struggle for expression. One says, 'Be a leaf, and at rest,' the other, 'Be a grasshopper. Hop!' One part of me submits, the other rebels, one wants, the other dislikes—in fact I am a dual personality. *Now* do you understand?"

"I'm afraid not," said Maggie, "—quite."

"Out of your depth?" asked the Leaf-Grasshopper, anxiously.

"I'm afraid it is, sir—a little," said Maggie.

"In that case," said the Leaf-Grasshopper, "perhaps we had better skip. That would bring us to the locusts—plain, homely creatures that are easy to grasp. Well, then, shall we skip?"

"Do you mean hop, Mr Green-Leaf?" said Jack, who had not been sure whether the Leaf-Grasshopper could hop—his wings were so big and seemed so much in the way.

"Call it what you like," said the Leaf-Grasshopper.

"Hop, skip, or jump, you know, the effect will be the same."

As he said this, the Leaf-Grasshopper rose into the air, and, to their surprise, Jack and Maggie went with him. There was a great swishing of all the leaves of the forest as they flew through them (for the skipping had turned into flying), the trees swayed and creaked, and everything seemed in commotion. Then, as they came down again, the leaves got fewer and fewer ; such trees as there were were smaller and had wider spaces between them, and the whole country began to look very different. Instead of a thick, impenetrable forest, impossible to see through for more than a few dozen yards, there was now a wide-stretched vista of cultivation and fertility. Crops of all kinds of edible grains and herbs—wheat, barley, rice, pulse, maize, millet, sesame—waved and nodded, seeming to vie with each other, and scattered amongst them were apple and pear, cherry, plum, orange and fig trees, as well as the tea and the coffee plant. There were palm-trees, too, and mangoes, and some others which Jack and Maggie had heard of, but never seen, as well as a great many that they had never either seen or heard about. In fact, it was much the most highly cultivated country that they had ever yet found themselves in.

CHAPTER VIII

ALL FULL OF GLORY AND GRANDEUR

“ I SUPPOSE we’re not in Nicaragua any more then, Mr Leaf-Gree—I mean Mr Green Grasshopper,” began Jack—for he was both confused and out of breath—and so was Maggie—with the great skip they had just made.

“ Grasshopper indeed ! ” said a voice that was not quite the same as the one that had last been speaking, and which sounded very indignant, “ Grasshopper indeed ! ”

“ I’m afraid I’ve forgotten the other name,” said Jack, “ but you know you are a ”—he was going to say “ a Leaf-Grasshopper,” but somehow the insect that was talking to him now didn’t look quite as if he was one. The great leaf-like wings were gone, and the long, slender antennæ had changed into a pair of short, thick ones that had almost the appearance of horns. The legs, too, were not only very conspicuous, but the two hinder ones were highly developed, and rose high above the line of the back—evidently they were used to leap with. Not that there were not wings as well, and powerful ones too, it would seem, for the upper pair, though their principal use was to make a sort of case for the other ones, were long and strong, and evidently had very good flying wings underneath them. In fact, they were just like those of a common English grasshopper, and so were the legs and the body and the short, stumpy antennæ, and the head and everything—only very much bigger. Altogether they made not a leaf-grasshopper indeed, but a very large grasshopper

of the ordinary kind, and now Jack remembered that the real Leaf-Grasshopper (who, somehow, seemed to be gone) had said that a little skipping would bring them to the locusts, and that "locust" was only another name for several species of grasshoppers that were found in great numbers, and were usually large, and had always a very large appetite. This one was about three inches long, and handsomer than a common grasshopper. His colour was more red than brown, but with black, white and coffee-coloured markings all over it, when one looked closer, and the upper wings, or wing-cases, had a greenish-grey tinge.

"I suppose you're a locust, then," said Jack, after a pause which had allowed him to make these observations, and during the whole time of which the new insect had gone on looking very indignant.

"As if there could be any doubt about it!" said the Locust (for now we see that he really was one) in a voice that was still full of vexation. "Why, do you think a mere grasshopper could do *that*?"

As he said "*that*" he made a sort of flourish all round him with his small antennæ, and then Jack and Maggie both noticed that, though everything else was very green and flourishing (for there were no other locusts at present) the plant on which *he* was sitting, though quite a good-sized one, had been very much eaten, so much so, in fact, that, as there was hardly a whole leaf on it, it was not easy, now, to say what kind of plant it was.

"Well," said the Locust again, with another angry jerk of his head, "*do* you think it could, yes or no?"

"Of course *a* grasshopper couldn't do it," Jack answered, "but perhaps several together might, and if they were all as big as you are, perhaps they could all

eat as much, and perhaps *then* people would call them locusts."

"Nonsense!" said the Locust very decidedly. "Why, do you suppose a *mere* grasshopper could be a locust under any circumstances? If it could, then we would be *mere* locusts, but nobody speaks of *us* in that way. Have you ever read such a sentence as this, for instance: 'The farmer came out to see what kind of insects had descended on his crops, but when he found that they were mere locusts—or merely locusts—or a mere flight of locusts'—and so on? Have you ever heard us alluded to in that sort of way?"

"No, I don't think I have," Jack answered, "because——"

"Of course not," said the Locust, "but one might very well say: 'Fortunately it was not the dreaded locust but a mere grasshopper which had been ignorantly mistaken for one.' A sentence like that wouldn't surprise you at all, would it?"

"No, I suppose not," Jack admitted, "but then——"

"Very well, then," said the Locust, "that shows the difference between us. Pray, for the future, do not confound *me* with a mere grasshopper."

Jack felt quite sure that there *was* a flaw somewhere in the Locust's argument, but he wasn't quite sure, for the moment, where it was, and he had no time to think, because the conversation went on again almost directly.

"Besides," the Locust continued, "when did you *ever* see a grasshopper with 'the horse's head, the eyes of the elephant, the neck of the bull, the horns of the stag, the chest of the lion, the belly'—I should perhaps say abdomen—'of the scorpion, the wings of the eagle, the legs of the ostrich, and the tail of the serpent'? Now, I ask you, *when* did you?"

“Oh, never, of course,” said Jack, “but——”

“Or you?” repeated the Locust, looking at Maggie, who had to say “Never” as well.

“But what insect does look like that?” asked Jack, who had never read of any that did.



“Do not confound *me* with a mere grasshopper”

“Not a single one except ourselves,” said the Locust proudly. “As applied to any other, such a description would be purely fictitious.”

“But does anybody think that *you’re* like it?” said Jack—he thought that was politer than saying *he* didn’t think so.

“Anybody, indeed!” said the Locust. “Why, that is how the Arabian writers unite in describing me,

and, as I live in their country, they ought to know best."

"But," said Maggie, after both she and Jack had taken a very long look at the Locust without being able to see any of these resemblances, "isn't that what one calls Oriental—Oriental—I can't quite think of the word, but it means something like exaggeration and that sort of thing, and Oriental always comes in front of it?"

"You must find your own words if you want to argue against me," said the Locust, "that's only fair, you know."

This, of course, was undeniable, and whilst Jack and Maggie were both trying to think of the right word, the Locust went on without waiting. "Such," he said, "is my portrait, as drawn by those who have had the best opportunities of observing me. But, of course, if you set yourself above the Arabian writers——"

"Oh no," cried Jack and Maggie together, for they felt that this would be very conceited.

"Very well," said the Locust, "then let me ask you, again, if that is the way in which you would think of describing a mere grasshopper?"

Of course both Jack and Maggie said that it wasn't, and then Jack, who wanted to get on a little further, asked: "Then are we in Arabia now, Mr Locust?"

"Really," answered the Locust, "I hardly know if it's there, or in Africa, or even somewhere else—Europe possibly, because, you see, we locusts go about so. We are great travellers—hence our name, *Migratorius*."

"Oh, is that your name, Mr Locust?" asked Jack.

"No less a one, I assure you," said the Locust. "I am *Pachytylus Migratorius*, the world-renowned Plague Locust of the Eastern Hemisphere."

"Plague Locust!" cried Maggie, before she could stop herself. "Oh, that's a dreadful name" (of course, directly after she had said it she felt horribly uncomfortable).

"A dreaded name indeed," said the Plague Locust, looking far from displeased, "widely and deservedly dreaded, as you say."

"I didn't quite say that," said Maggie, taking courage upon finding that the Locust was not offended, as she had thought he would be. "I said 'dreadful,' but I suppose it's not very different. Only, a plague's not a very nice thing, you know, Mr—Mr Locust."

"*Plague* Locust," said the Locust, with emphasis. "Now that you know it, I cannot consent to be shorn of a title of which our race is justly proud."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mr—Mr Plague Locust," said Maggie, "and of course, if you *are* proud of it——"

"If indeed!" said the Plague Locust. "I have a right to be proud of a name which our race has always borne, and which has been bestowed upon us on account of our strong imperial instincts. I'm proud of *them*, of course."

"But does that make you a plague, Mr Plague Locust?" said Jack rather doubtfully. (He had heard his father talk of both, but never of both together.)

"To be sure it does," the Plague Locust answered. "You see, one must be a plague to one's enemies, and imperial instincts produce such a number. Why, they're everywhere, and, wherever they are, it is both our duty and destiny to plague them. So, of course, we *do* plague them (*that is their* destiny), but it is a hard burden upon us—a hard and a heavy burden."

"Is it, Mr Plague Locust?" said Jack sympathetically—for sympathy was evidently called for.

"It is," said the Plague Locust sadly (but not despondingly, oh no). "However," he continued (and his voice *now* had a fine, manly ring in it), "we do not sink under the load. No, indeed. We are far too strenuous for that. The life of a Plague Locust is, perhaps, the most strenuous of any that ever was lived."

"Really, Mr Plague Locust?" said Jack.

"Full of difficulties for us to rise superior to," said the Plague Locust, jauntily. "Starvation and drowning are amongst the most common, and, not unfrequently, we are burnt alive."

"Oh, that must be dreadful," said Maggie. "But how does it happen? Do you fly into candles, like moths?"

"Candles indeed!" said the Plague Locust. "We wouldn't think much of candles, even if there were thousands of them together. But when it comes to great bonfires, all over the place, or long lines of flame that we are compelled to march through, that is another thing. Not that we don't put them out, too, after a time, but, of course, a great many of us get burnt in the interval, which is very unpleasant."

"Yes, of course it must be, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack, "but why——"

"Other efforts for our destruction, equally inhuman, are adopted in other countries," the Plague Locust continued, without waiting. "But have you not read of our trials and sufferings? They have made some noise in the world."

"Yes, I have read something about locusts, sir," Jack answered, "but—but——"

"But what?" said the Plague Locust.

"Well, it wasn't so much *your* trials, sir," said Jack.

"You surprise me," said the Plague Locust, "because it *is* a trial to be burnt alive, you know."

"Yes, of course," said Jack, "I know that, but——"

"A severe one, *I* think," said the Plague Locust. "Even drowning, though preferable, is——"

"Yes, of course, but that's not what I mean, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack. "What I mean is that you—that is, I mean that what I've read about you——"

"I think you had better explain yourself," said the Plague Locust.

"Well, it's always been about what happened because of you, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack, feeling a little uncomfortable, "the harm that you did, I mean, and—and that sort of thing. I don't mean you by yourself, of course," he explained—for the Locust was as big as himself, and he didn't want to make him angry—"but ever so many of you together, you know, and coming down all at once, and eating everything, and—and making places barren, you know——"

"A nice way of twisting things, to be sure!" interrupted the Plague Locust, indignantly. "Well, of all the injustices! *Everything*, indeed, when it's all we can do to maintain ourselves! Why, we never rise satisfied, but that's not enough, it appears. We must leave what there is, must we? Oh, thank you."

"It's only what we've read, you know, Mr Plague Locust," said Maggie, for, of course, she had read a little about locusts too.

"If it were only fair I wouldn't mind," said the Plague Locust. "I could bear it, then. But to put it in that way, as if to be numerous and have good appetites were a crime! If we were greedy, indeed, that would be different, but the central fact that we don't get enough is carefully disguised."

"But, you see, the worst of it is, Mr Plague Locust——" began Jack.

"I know of nothing worse than that," said the Plague Locust. "Leave places barren, do we? As if other dinner-tables were not often left just the same! And then, as for coming down, all together, that is another misstatement. The real fact is that, on account of our numbers—of which we are justly proud—it takes us such a time to settle that some of us get our sustenance later, and don't find so much."

"But then, think of the loss, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack.

"I *do* think of it," said the Plague Locust. "The loss of a meal is not a thing not to be noticed, and I have often gone supperless to bed."

"But you might think a little of others," said Maggie.

"How can one when one's hungry?" said the Plague Locust. "And, of course, if one hasn't enough, one always is hungry."

"Oh, it's all very well to talk about having enough," said Jack, "but you know you locusts do eat everything that grows, and so——"

"Pardon me," said the Plague Locust. "I have no doubt you wish to be fair, but we are not quite so well off as that. True, we are very accommodating, and will put up with much that others would turn from. None, I am sure, can call us fastidious or dainty, since, upon occasion, we will eat the very wool from the backs of the sheep, though far from a nourishing diet. Still we put up with it, as also with curtains and tablecloths when forced to come inside houses. All ordinary vegetables I am sure we are thankful for—even the bitter bark of the orange and pomegranate trees, when we have disposed of the leaves and the fruit; but the blue-gum, or *eucalyptus*, as well as the paradise tree, as they call it in Africa, we *have* to leave, because they are

poisonous to us. Nobody would blame us for that, I suppose."

"Oh no, I'm sure no one would, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack, in a very convinced tone of voice, and Maggie added, "It's not *that* that people complain of."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Plague Locust; "and as to eating each other, when it comes to the worst—well, it may be dreadful, but what is one to do?"

"But do you ever eat each other, Mr Plague Locust?" asked Maggie, feeling quite shocked.

"I don't say it's right, of course," said the Plague Locust apologetically. "For my part, I'd rather eat *anything*"—here he looked at Jack and Maggie in a way that was not very pleasant, and said "*anything*" again, with still greater emphasis.

"Ye—es, I suppose so," said Jack, not feeling quite comfortable.

"The worst of it is," continued the Plague Locust, "that, when there isn't anything, one can't eat anything, and so—I hope I make myself clear?"

"Oh, I think we understand, sir," said Maggie, as the Plague Locust seemed to pause for a reply.

"All I can hope is," said the Plague Locust, "that the world, having regard to all the circumstances, will not judge us too harshly, but look upon our conduct, on these rare occasions, with an indulgent eye."

"Yes, sir," said Maggie, whilst she tried to think of some question which might turn the conversation in a more pleasant direction.

"Do you think it will?" the Plague Locust asked anxiously.

"Oh yes, Mr Plague Locust, I think so," said Jack, for he didn't remember ever having heard locusts blamed for this.

"You relieve me immensely," said the Plague Locust. "Then, now, if you would care to listen, I can narrate to you some of the more memorable incidents in our brilliant, though chequered, career."

Of course Jack and Maggie said they would care to listen, and they had not very long to wait.

"Our first great drowning," began the Plague Locust—"for it almost always ended in that—took place about 4000 B.C.—the famous Egyptian campaign—but I pass to more settled chronology. In the year of the world, 3800, our cohorts made a most gallant descent upon Africa. Our object was to turn the rank growth of vegetation which existed there, at that period, to the best possible account, nor was there a single locust in our ranks who flinched from the performance of his duty. No effort was spared in reducing the prevalent greenness, and when we finally bade adieu to the country, the thoroughness with which our work had been done was shown by its blackened and blasted appearance. We then put to sea, intending to fly across the neighbouring straits, but, instead of that—I don't exactly know how it happened, no doubt there was bungling somewhere—we were so unlucky as to fly into them, and perished there miserably. Millions on millions of our bodies—I speak in round numbers—were thrown up along the shore, where they lay for miles, festering in the sun—a sight to arouse the strongest feelings of compassion."

"I suppose it was very dreadful," said Maggie, for the Locust had stopped a moment, as though overcome with emotion.

"Dreadful indeed!" said the Plague Locust. "It produced a pestilence. There could be no stronger evidence of the magnitude of the disaster."

"Did the pestilence kill a lot of people?" asked Jack.

"Quite a million, I believe," said the Plague Locust, "yet hundreds and thousands of us must have been drowned for every one. Such was the disastrous climax to an otherwise brilliant campaign."

"But was there any fighting, then?" said Jack (for he knew what was meant by a campaign).

"The inhabitants were most hostile," answered the Plague Locust, "but they could do nothing. We were invincible except by the elements."

"Of course, if you ate all their food, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack, in a tone which showed how unfair he thought it.

"It was a splendid achievement as far as it went," said the Plague Locust. "After that, in A.D. 591, we burst suddenly into Europe, and were for some time successful over a great part of Italy. It was a fine, dashing performance, but ended, unfortunately, in another great naval disaster."

"Was it as bad as the other one?" asked Jack.

"I have reason to fear so," replied the Plague Locust, "since the pestilence resulting from it was on much the same scale. From a subsequent lighter irruption—a mere raid—into Venetian territory, we succeeded in withdrawing our forces in safety, but the fruits of victory, as measured by a famine which followed our departure, were less considerable. This small but well-conducted enterprise took place in 1478."

"But are there locusts in Italy, then?" Jack asked.

The Plague Locust shook his head. "None of our lineage, I fear," he said sadly, "unless it be a few stragglers. It was an incursion, merely, of which there have been many, but we have never succeeded in maintaining our hold upon that fruitful country" (here he

sighed deeply), "or indeed upon Europe generally. Our most notable effort, perhaps, was in 1650. In that year our forces entered Russia at three different points, and then, combining, ate their way into Poland and Lithuania. All gave way before us, even the hardiest shrubs were compelled to minister to our wants, and the trees on which we settled bowed down."

"With your weight, I suppose, sir?" said Maggie.

"The weight of our authority was indeed felt," said the Plague Locust. "We covered the earth like an extensive and very beautiful tablecloth—the earth *is* our table, you know—but this bright period was not to last. Reverses, unfortunately, followed, and of so serious a nature that our bodies, in places, lay heaped on one another, to a depth of fully four feet—a pitiable spectacle. Our losses, in fact, were enormous, but the famine to which they gave rise, though it but poorly avenged them, was an eloquent testimony to the valour—the fierce appetite, I may almost call it—with which we had fought."

"Buteating isn't fighting, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack.

"It's destroying the enemy's country," said the Plague Locust, "and if that isn't fighting, what is?"

"Well, perhaps it is, in a way," said Jack, doubtfully.

"It is *our* way," said the Plague Locust—which settled it.

"But come, let's get on," he continued. "The following year found us in—where do you think?"

"I don't know." "I really don't know, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack and Maggie, after thinking a little.

"Why, in England," said the Plague Locust triumphantly. "But we had to yield to the climate," he went on, in a more subdued tone. "We perished even before we could lay our eggs."

"Bravo!" said Jack—only he said it aside, as people do on the stage.

"Our next great campaign," the Plague Locust proceeded, "was in 1747, when we invaded Lithuania, and actually pushed forward a column, three miles broad, which flew right over Vienna—a wonderful military feat, when one comes to think of it."

"And were there more famines and pestilences?" asked Jack.

"We did our work thoroughly," the Plague Locust answered, "but not so thoroughly as when, in 1778, we burst upon the empire of Morocco, and maintained our footing there for three consecutive years, in spite of the great distance from our headquarters in Arabia."

"Three years!" exclaimed Jack—he wondered how any empire could go on for so long under such circumstances.

"It seems extraordinary," said the Plague Locust, "but our policy then, as on other occasions, was to live on the country. Consequently we were not embarrassed with a commissariat."

"Whatever's that?" said Jack.

"Oh, I think I know," said Maggie. "It's a grand word for carrying provisions."

"And were you drowned at last, Mr Locust?" asked Jack.

"I really think that was the end of it," the Plague Locust admitted. "You see, we are not good sailors, we locusts; our triumphs have been always on land. There, however, we have had enough and to spare, and this in Morocco was one of our greatest."

"Locusts *are* found in Africa, aren't they?" said Jack, who had just remembered where Morocco was.

"Found there, indeed!" said the Plague Locust.

"It is one of the most important parts of our empire, and when it ceases to be so, our fortunes will be on the wane. Oh yes, we have always held Africa. May it never become a second Cyprus."

"Then you don't hold Cyprus, Mr Plague Locust?" said Jack.

"Not now," said the Plague Locust. "It is a very sore point with us."

"More than Italy, Mr Locust?" asked Maggie.

"You see it took place quite recently," the Plague Locust explained. "There has not been time to forget it. The circumstances too were of peculiar atrocity. Our march was impeded by smooth leather bands which we were unable to surmount, so that we fell by myriads into pits that had been treacherously dug for our reception, and where we were ruthlessly slain."

"But couldn't you fly over the leather bands, Mr Locust?" asked Jack in surprise.

"That is the blackest feature of a very black business," said the Plague Locust, in tones of the strongest condemnation. "We were attacked and massacred *before we could fly!*"

"Oh, I see, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack.

"That is not *civilised* warfare," said the Plague Locust, with a curl of his antennæ, "but comment is superfluous."

"But aren't you always attacked like that, then?" asked Jack.

"Two wrongs," said the Plague Locust, "do not make a right."

"But then——" said Maggie.

"Nor two thousand," added the Plague Locust sternly--so sternly that she didn't finish the sentence.

"Yes," he continued, with a very bitter expression, "it was in that way that we lost Cyprus."

"But, Mr Locust," said Jack, "why didn't you go round the leather bands, as you couldn't get over them?"

"Good gracious," said the Plague Locust, "why, they were of immense length; they stretched right across the country."

"But anyhow, you might have turned round and gone the other way," said Jack.

"Pardon me," said the Plague Locust, "that is not what *our* armies are in the habit of doing. With others it may be different, but when a Plague Locust says, 'There will be no turning back,' why there isn't any."

"But surely——" began Jack.

"And that's what he always does say," the Plague Locust added.

"But——" said Jack again.

"Nothing daunts him," the Plague Locust continued; "no danger turns him; he marches on, even into the teeth of destruction. Such is the spirit which animates our troops."

"But if it isn't any use, you know, Mr Locust?" said Maggie.

"That makes it all the more splendid," said the Plague Locust. "What! a locust on the march turn back—in the face of the enemy? Never!"

"I only meant——" Jack tried to explain.

"It's no use talking. Hurrah!" said the Plague Locust, and both Jack and Maggie felt sure that if only he had had a cap on his head he would have thrown it up. "Yes," he continued, a little more calmly, "it was a great disaster, but at least we died, as Plague Locusts should do, with our faces to the foe. Let me describe

the scene. You have heard of the Chinese Wall, perhaps ; the trap into which our army fell was something of the same sort. Everywhere, as far as the eye could reach, an interminable line of calico——”

“Of calico !” exclaimed Maggie.

“Pray, don’t interrupt me,” said the Plague Locust irritably ; “—an interminable line of calico, towering to a height of four feet, lay stretched in our way. It was surmounted by a coping of polished leather, the smooth and slippery surface of which afforded not the slightest foothold. If it had been only perpendicular we could not have surmounted it, but, with truly fiendish ingenuity, the impediment had been so constructed as to slant towards us, thus presenting our heroes with a smooth overhanging precipice. It was in vain that, time after time, we swarmed up the rugged calico ; each fresh contingent, as it reached the point of junction, fell from the glazed surface beyond it, and it was usually to rise no more. Pits, so deep as almost to appear bottomless, received great numbers, whilst others were swept into them by men—I should rather say monsters—stationed, at intervals, for that cruel purpose. When full, brushwood was piled above our mangled bodies, it was lighted, and they were consumed in the flames. The vast cavities were then emptied, to be again and again refilled in the same ghastly manner. Thus, day after day, the grim tragedy continued, till hardly a locust of us was left to tell the tale.”

“I suppose a *tremendous* lot of you got caught, Mr Plague Locust,” said Jack.

“I do not wish to exaggerate,” said the Plague Locust, “but in saying that something like a hundred thousand million billion quadrillions of locusts fell on that fatal field I am rather under than over-estimating.”

"Are you really, Mr Locust?" said Jack.

"I have an object in doing so," said the Plague Locust. "The real figures would only bewilder you, but this may give you some feeble idea."

"Yes, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack.

"This shocking affair," continued the Plague Locust, "the greatest massacre, perhaps, on record—took place in the early eighties, nor have we ever recovered from it. Our forces, thus weakened, continued to dwindle, and we ultimately abandoned the island after having held it in full sovereignty since the year 1600. The author of this diabolical invention was a certain Signor Matthei, an Italian gentleman. You cannot wonder that his name is handed down to perpetual execration amongst us."

Neither Jack nor Maggie wondered at that, but they did rather wonder that they had not heard a great deal more about Signor Matthei, and especially of his having received a very large reward for saving Cyprus from the locusts. Only they did not say so because it might not have been safe.

"The above," continued the Plague Locust, "are a few of our principal campaigns. Like other great warlike nations, we have had our reverses, but our victories far outweigh them, and every country into which we have penetrated can bear witness to how well we have fought for our rights."

"But what are your rights, if it comes to that, Mr Plague Locust?" said Jack.

"Why, to eat and lay our eggs, to be sure," answered the Plague Locust. "That is all we lay claim to, and after all, is it much? Yet it is in the endeavour to satisfy these two simple wants that we have met with such fierce opposition. It is strange."

"I don't know about its being very strange, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack.

"However, there it is," said the Plague Locust, "so now, instead of talking about it any more, perhaps it would amuse you to see one of our campaigns."

As a locust campaign seemed to have so much to do with famines and pestilences, it is doubtful what Jack or Maggie would have said to this, but, before either of them could answer, a large black cloud that had been visible for some time in the distance suddenly got larger and nearer, and the next moment it had turned into a cloud of locusts that were flying about everywhere. The sky, which had at first been blue, now looked like a mezzotint engraving, but, as the locusts grew thicker, it became darker and darker, and the sun had the same sort of appearance as when one sees it through a very heavy snowstorm.

"We could hide it altogether, you know," the Plague Locust explained, "but as then you wouldn't see anything, I have only ordered up the advance-guard. Don't be frightened," he added, seeing that Jack and Maggie didn't look quite comfortable. "It's only a review. Well, do you admire the discipline?"

It certainly did seem very wonderful that, with such an enormous crowd of insects all flying together, none of them should get in each other's way. All moved in the same direction without the least confusion, and yet there could be no leaders or officers, because all were dressed (as we should say) just alike, so that there was nothing to distinguish any one of them from another.

"How do you manage it, Mr Plague Locust?" Jack asked.

"It is a part of our tactics," replied the Plague Locust. "You see, we all move *en masse*."



"Charge,!" cried the Plague Locust

"But there are such a lot of you, and yet you keep in such good order," said Jack (for he didn't quite see how this explained it).

"Why, of course we do," said the Plague Locust. "Without order, you know, an army becomes a mere rabble."

"Yes, of course, Mr Plague Locust," said Jack, "but how——"

"Such," continued the Plague Locust, "are our tactics, and now, if you've seen enough of the evolutions, there may as well be a charge. Don't be afraid," he added. "It's only a sham fight, you know."

"Oh no, sir," said Jack and Maggie, though they both did feel rather afraid.

"Charge!" cried the Plague Locust, and the next instant (unless it had begun a little before, as Jack thought) the rushing sound in the air, which had been like a high wind in the rigging of a ship, seemed to grow into a storm, as the locusts swooped down upon the ground, and on to every tree and bush and blossom that grew there, and began eating everything up. There were ever so many of them round Jack and Maggie, so that they began to feel quite anxious, and to wonder whether, at their present size, they might not be recognised, but mistaken for some kind of vegetable, which, of course, would have been very dangerous. All at once, however, and long before they had finished what there was, these locusts flew up again, and soon the whole army rose into the air, and continued their orderly flight. In a very little while the sky was clear again, and they only looked like a vanishing cloud in the distance. Jack and Maggie saw then that the crops, and fruit-trees, and so on, had only been eaten in patches, here and there—it seemed as if all the locusts

had not been so very hungry—in fact, things did not look quite so bad as they had expected they would do. They were rather surprised, and Jack was just going to say something about it when the Plague Locust—for the one they had been talking to had stayed there all the time—began to explain it to him.

“You see,” he said, “this was only a cavalry charge. When our infantry comes into action the effect will be much more terrific.”

And, almost whilst he was speaking, a peculiar appearance became visible on the ground, at some distance. Something was evidently moving upon it, and, as it came nearer, it was easy to see that this something was another great army of locusts that were walking—that is to say, jumping—instead of flying.

“Can’t they fly?” asked Jack, who had only read of great *flights* of locusts.

“If they could,” replied the Plague Locust, “they would be cavalry, and not infantry. Why, don’t you see that they have no wings?”

Jack saw then that they hadn’t, which made them not quite so big, and there were some other slight differences as well, but still it was very evident that they were locusts, and Plague Locusts too. They jumped, or sometimes crawled, along in a very resolute manner, holding their heads high up, which gave them quite a proud appearance—they really did look like an army on the march. They all moved in the same direction, just as the flying locusts had done, only some of them stopped here, and some there, to eat whatever they came to. Of course, as this grew less and less, they stopped less and less often, and, at last, the locusts that came right behind didn’t stop at all. It would have been foolish for them to do so, for *now* the

whole earth looked as if it had been burnt. There was not a leaf on any tree, or a blade or grain of any growing thing anywhere—the trees, too, had all been stripped of their bark.

"Oh dear," cried Maggie, "why, there'll be *nothing* left to eat."

"Oh, you needn't be uneasy," said the Plague Locust, "they'll come to something farther on."

"Yes, *they* will, perhaps," said Maggie, who had not meant that at all, "but——"

"It seems a little hard, no doubt," said the Plague Locust, "but then, what can we do? Where there are so many mouths to fill, some *must* come last."

This, of course, was true, but it did not make Jack and Maggie feel the least bit more easy, because *they* were thinking of the poor inhabitants of the country. Jack, in fact, had long ago made up his mind that locusts were amongst those exceptional insects that it was right to kill. "Only, it's no use collecting them," he thought, "and besides, there are none in England."

"So now," continued the Plague Locust, "you have seen what our foot-soldiers can do. Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think it's dreadful, Mr Locust," said Maggie. "Why, you've turned the country into a desert."

"It's a regular wilderness now," said Jack ruefully.

The Plague Locust bowed and looked extremely pleased. "The very words I should have used in describing it," he remarked. "You must really be judges."

"If you really *try* to do it, Mr Plague Locust——" began Jack angrily.

"Try to!" said the Plague Locust, "why, it's the plan of campaign."

"Oh, is it?" said Jack indignantly.

"To be sure it is," said the Plague Locust. "Why, what did you imagine? Such," he continued (as Jack made no answer), "is our strategy. Many other armies have adopted it—which, of course, shows its soundness,—and sometimes, it cannot be denied, we have been closely approached by our imitators. But we still remain supreme."

"I daresay you do," said Jack—both he and Maggie felt indignant, but they were afraid to show it more plainly.

"Of course, when our infantry acquire wings," the Plague Locust went on, "they will then become cavalry. Both branches of the service are highly efficient—as you must have observed—but our most signal successes have always been due to our foot-soldiers. This you had better remember, as, in most books, comparatively little is said of them."

"Why?" asked Jack.

"I really don't know," said the Plague Locust—"unless it has to do with appearances," he added. "Writers, you know, are romantic, and a locust never looks so well as when mounted."

"Mounted?" said Maggie. "But what on?—because you don't really ride, Mr Plague Locust."

"Why, on his wings, to be sure," said the Plague Locust. "A locust, thus horsed, and riding on the wind or the whirlwind, naturally shows to better advantage than one only crawling or hopping, and so is more talked of. However, as every foot-soldier becomes a cavalryman in time, jealousy between the two branches is unknown. No, no, there is no occasion for repining in our army. All are equally handsome, to start with, and look for higher admiration when the proper period arrives. Such is our system of promotion."

"It's rather a funny one, isn't it?" said Jack.

"As for that," said the Plague Locust, "one must judge by results, and there has never been a mutiny in our ranks. Well, what would you like to see now?" he asked somewhat abruptly. "The sham fight's over, but if you'd like to see a sham drowning, or famine, or pestilence——"

"No, I shouldn't," said Jack—and Maggie said she would rather not either.

"Why not?" said the Plague Locust.

"Because it's all very well for you to call it a sham fight, Mr Locust," said Jack, "but if eating *is* fighting, then I call it a real one; and I don't want there to be a real famine or pestilence as well."

"Now I come to think of it," said the Plague Locust, "there are not enough people to have one. Why, I see nobody except just you two, so it would be quite wasted. Well, then, what do you say to some egg-laying?"

"You'd better look at us if you want to see that," said a voice that was just like the Plague Locust's, only smaller, and not quite in the same place.

Jack and Maggie looked about, and, sure enough, there was a smaller Locust that they had neither of them noticed before, only a short hop away from them. Of course they were both interested in seeing a new species—especially Jack—and so walked towards it, and Jack was just going to say something when it occurred to him that the Plague Locust might be offended, which made him stop and look back.

"Oh, you needn't mind him," said the small Locust, "because you're in Australia now, and he can't follow you, because it's not his habitat. Well, how are you? It's been a long, dull passage, I'm afraid. He talks of

nothing but the warlike exploits of his family, which all the world knows and has read about—highly remarkable, no doubt, but quite ancient history by this time. In fact our old friend Migratorius has become just a little of a bore. Well, never mind, *I* am brisker and can introduce you to novelty. Hardly anybody knows how we lay our eggs, which is just what we're doing at present. You've only to look at us; it's a picturesque ceremony, and well worthy your attention."

All the while the little Locust was speaking, she—for it was evidently a female—kept pressing the end of her abdomen against the ground, and moving it about in a funny sort of way which made it go more and more into it. In fact she was boring a hole, and it was not only she who was doing so, but the whole country, now—it was a strange, barren, desert-looking country, with red, sandy soil—was covered with locusts of the same species as this one, who were acting in just the same way. Some, of course, had already bored their holes, and were engaged in laying their eggs in them, whilst others, having finished laying, and filled up the holes with sand, were walking quietly away. But the most curious part about it was that each of the locusts that was boring holes, or laying eggs, was attended by two other ones who stood, one on each side of her, with their heads and antennæ touching hers, and their bodies turned outwards, so that the three together made a little three-rayed star. That was funny, but perhaps it was funner still that, round each of these little live locust-stars, from thirty to fifty other locusts stood in a ring, and seemed to be looking on.

"Because, you see," said the Australian Locust, who saw that both Jack and Maggie were surprised at this, "it's such an important proceeding. If we didn't lay

our eggs there would be a very great failure in the number of locusts produced, so no wonder they're interested."

"But why does the locust that lays the eggs have two other ones with her?" asked Jack.

"Why, to take their advice, to be sure," the Locust answered. "We put our three heads together, you see."

"Advice about laying your eggs, Mrs Locust?" said Jack.

"Certainly," said the Locust. "Haven't you ever read this sort of sentence in a book: 'Before committing himself to so decisive a step he determined to take the advice of one or two friends'—only here it's 'she,' you know?"

"Yes, I think I have sometimes," said Maggie. "At any rate one might read it."

"Very well, then," said the Locust, "so we take two, to be on the safe side—because, you see, laying one's eggs is *the* most decisive step that one *can* commit oneself to."

"Then I suppose some female locusts don't lay their eggs," said Jack.

"They *all* do," said the Locust indignantly, "because," she explained in a calmer tone, "they're always advised to."

"But supposing——" began Jack.

"Oh, nonsense," said the Locust impatiently. "Supposing indeed! Why, a locust who advised otherwise would not be worthy of the name. What do *you* say, my dears?"

The two attendant locusts (which, somehow, as well as the other ones, neither Jack nor Maggie had noticed just at first) bowed gravely, and though they said nothing, it was easy to see that they were, both of

them, very indignant—in fact, they looked quite scandalised.

“But surely,” said Maggie, “if they only advise you to do what you mean to do, and you know they won’t say anything else, you might do without advice of that sort.”

“Not at all,” said the Locust. “Why, it’s that that makes the comfort of it. An opposite system would be most embarrassing. To be advised *not* to do what one means to do! No indeed, that’s the kind of advice that *I* like to do without.”

“But then——” said Jack

“We will not pursue the subject further,” said the Australian Locust. “Such is our method. It suits *us*. Elsewhere, perhaps, the practice may be unknown.”

“Please, Mrs Locust,” said Jack, “do any other insects lay their eggs in the same way that you do—I mean with two attendants, and a great many others to look on?”

“Not a single one does,” said the Locust proudly. “It is a ceremony practised only by ourselves. What’s more, there’s hardly a book you will find it in—if any—except this one.”

“Really, Mrs Locust?” said Jack.

“If you ask *me*,” said the Locust, “I don’t believe there *is* another popular work where you’ll find so many curious, true things about insects.”

“It seems very funny,” said Jack.

“Do you allude to the ceremony, or to what I’ve just told you?” said the Locust.

“Oh, I meant the ceremony, Mrs Locust,” said Jack.

“Then ‘funny’ is not the right word,” said the Locust. “It is peculiar—and admirable. You may well be thankful that you have been privileged to see it.”

“How many eggs do you lay, Mrs Locust?” asked Jack.

"Nineteen exactly," the Locust answered.

"Oh, really, Mrs Locust—not twenty?" said Jack, before he could stop himself.

"Nineteen, I said," said the Locust, icily. "Twenty would be a gross impropriety."

Jack just stopped himself from asking why—which would have been another injudicious question—and the Locust, having recovered herself, went on in an affable manner. "Perhaps," she said, "before I deposit my eggs in it, you would like to see the cavity I have prepared for their reception."

She removed her abdomen as she made the inquiry, and immediately Jack and Maggie found themselves standing on the edge of what looked almost like a well—only without water in it—it was so smooth and round and perpendicular.

"Mind you don't fall down it," said the Locust anxiously, "because if you did you'd be in America, or somewhere, before you knew where you were."

"I'm sure I don't know why, Mrs Locust," said Jack, who thought this very extraordinary.

"It's something to do with the Antipodes, I suppose," said Maggie, "because we're in Australia now, and so if it was deep enough, and we were to go right down until——"

Somehow, whilst Maggie was speaking, the well seemed to be getting much deeper—ever so deep, in fact, so that looking into it made both her and Jack giddy. Whether they did fall down it after that they were never quite sure, but, all at once, they felt a sort of jerk, and then the country and everything looked different, and it was not a locust now—at least not the same kind of one, but larger—and greener—and—yes, and handsomer—that was advancing to meet them.

CHAPTER IX

A VERY DISTINGUISHED MUSICIAN

“OH, Jack, look!” cried Maggie. “Here’s another enormous green grasshopper.”

“Pardon me,” said the new arrival, who, big as he was, compared to one of our grasshoppers, was yet a very pretty and slenderly made creature, of a beautiful apple-green colour, and with long, delicate antennæ, so thin at the ends that one could hardly see where they left off. “Pardon me, I am a katydid. My figure is slight, almost feminine, though *I* represent the tuneful sex. Enormous! No, indeed, and as for being a grasshopper, I am not one of the *Acridiidae*, which are what *I* call grasshoppers. Therefore I am not one.”



“Pardon me, I am a katydid”

“Aren’t you?” said Maggie, in a very surprised tone of voice.

“Certainly not,” said the Katydid. “That is not my true position in the animal kingdom.”

Maggie had only an "Oh" to say to this, but she thought to herself, "If he isn't a grasshopper, I'm sure he looks like one." Even Jack was a little surprised, at first, but he thought that perhaps "grasshopper" was not a sufficiently grand word for such an elegant-looking insect.

"You don't look like a locust, Mr—Mr Katydid," he said, "at least not like those I've been talking to. But perhaps you are one, all the same."

"Do you mean one of the *locustidæ*?" said the Katydid quickly.

"I mean a locust," said Jack, "but I suppose a locust *is* one of the *locustidæ*, because——"

"Then you're wrong," said the Katydid. "A locust, in the way *you* mean it—I mean to say, what *you* call a locust—is not one of the *locustidæ*, so, as *I am* one of them, of course I can't be a locust."

"That seems rather funny," said Jack, "because——"

"Scientific classification *is* funny," said the Katydid, "but I thought *you* knew something about it. A locust," he continued, "as *you* are accustomed to think of it, is only a larger sort of grasshopper, and they both have short, ugly-looking antennæ, like horns. Now the *locustidæ*—to which *I* belong—have long, graceful, beautiful antennæ, and they are also musical, which locusts, you know, are not. Remember, please, for the future—that is to say, if you *want* to be an entomologist—that a locust can never be one of the *locustidæ* however much it may try to, and that we, who do belong to the *locustidæ*, are not what you *call* locusts, though, properly speaking, perhaps, we may claim to *be* locusts, because locusts and *locustidæ* ought to mean the same thing."

"But why don't they, then?" said Jack.

"Oh, it's been arranged so," said the Katydid.

"It's rather confusing," said Jack.

"Perhaps it is," said the Katydid, "but scientific people have done it, so we've got to put up with it—and be grateful."

"But couldn't they change it?" asked Maggie.

"Change it!" said the Katydid, looking quite shocked, "why, it's established. It's been going on for ever so long, you know."

"I don't see what that matters," said Maggie. "When a thing's ridiculous *I* think it ought to be changed."

"Nobody shall change me into a locust," said the Katydid, "that is to say, not an unmusical locust, with short, clumsy antennæ, like horns. As for the proper kind—I mean a musical locust with antennæ like these—that is what I am really, already, only you had better not call me one, but only a *locusta* or a *locustid*, or one of the *locustidæ*, or we really *may* be getting confused."

To both Jack and Maggie it seemed as if they had been getting confused, for some time, and they didn't feel quite sure whether the Katydid was really a locust, without the name of one, or was only called so, in Latin, without really being one—for *locusta* is Latin for a locust, Jack said to himself. As for his not being a grasshopper, they felt sure that was wrong, but he was evidently too proud to think himself one. But at any rate he was a katydid, and they thought the best way was to remember that; though, as for what a katydid was, "Why, it's just a large green grasshopper," said Maggie to herself, "and a very pretty one."

"You've heard of me, of course," said the Katydid, resuming the conversation. "At least, I suppose you have, because I'm famous."

"What are you famous for?" asked Maggie.

"Why, for giving concerts, to be sure," the Katydid answered. "Our musical abilities are very great—in fact extraordinary. They are confined to the males, it is true, but *I* am a male katydid."

"I don't think I've heard of you," said Maggie.

"Dear me, what ignorance!" remarked the Katydid aside, and Jack, who knew all about it, said, "Why, don't you know, Maggie? Those things that sit on the trees, in America, and say, 'Katy did, Katy did, she did' all day and night. It's in all the good insect books, but I didn't know they were like that."

"Then we're in America, I suppose," said Maggie. "It was Australia just before."

"United States, America," said Jack, with confidence. He had only read of katydids there.

"*I* call it the woods," said the Katydid, "and those other names seem to me nonsense—at least they have no meaning for me. You are in my own woods that I have known from infancy, and I am here to welcome you, and to ask you to one of our concerts."

"Oh, thank you," said Maggie—for it was at her, more particularly, that the Katydid had looked—"it's very kind of you; but do you really give them?—I mean real ones," she added, feeling that she had said something wrong, and wishing to make it better; but the Katydid didn't seem to think it at all better, for it looked hurt, and said, with a little quiver of its antennæ, "I would not ask you to a sham concert, you know."

"Oh, she didn't mean that," said Jack.

"Oh no, indeed," said Maggie. "I wouldn't have said anything so rude. Only I was surprised, because I thought it was only we who gave real concerts."

"If *you* would rather invite *me* to a concert first," said the Katydid, "*that* would be very kind of *you*."

"I'm afraid we can't," said Maggie, "because—because we never do, you know."



"Poor little apteroids!"

"Don't you?" said the Katydid. "I thought you said you did."

"I didn't mean we gave them ourselves," said Maggie; "some people, I meant."

"Even if we did give concerts," said Jack, "we couldn't give one here, in the woods, because we haven't any instruments."

"Oh, come," said the Katydid, "you've got your wing-cases. At least"—he was looking curiously at both of them—"I suppose those queer-looking things on your thoraxes *are* wing-cases, and, if they are, why not scrape them together? That's how I play."

"They're not wing-cases," said Jack. "It would be no use our having wing-cases because we've not got wings to go under them. We don't fly, you know."

"Not fly!" exclaimed the Katydid. "That *is* an inferiority. Poor little apteroids! and so clumsy on the ground too!"

"We don't feel clumsy," said Maggie, "and I didn't know we looked so."

"Excuse me," said the Katydid, "I thought it was obvious, or should not have mentioned it. But your wings may be atrophied," he continued, "as some of your legs seem to be. That is the case with some poor beetles, who yet retain their elytra."

"Their what?" said Maggie.

"It's the same as wing-cases," the Katydid answered, "and I think these"—by "these" he evidently meant the upper part of their clothes, which he was feeling with his antennæ—"are yours."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Jack, and Maggie exclaimed, rather indignantly, "We're not insects, you know."

But the Katydid didn't seem to hear them, but went on passing his long delicate antennæ all over Jack's coat and Maggie's bodice, as though he were a much better judge of the matter. "And yet I don't know," he said at last, "they certainly don't seem adapted for scraping. These sheaths"—he meant Jack's two coat lappets—"might perhaps do something if they overlapped more, and were harder; but you seem to be too softly made. Besides, you open in front instead of at

the back, which is a mystery to me, though perhaps it would not affect the sound, if only you were less flabby. As for you," he went on, speaking to Maggie, "you are harder, but then *you* don't seem to open at all. If you did, and these rough excrescences"—it must have been buttons or braid or hooks or something that he meant—"could be superimposed on one another, the result might be passable, but as it is—no, I'm afraid you're neither of you musical."

"I don't play, anyhow, or sing either, if that's what you mean," said Jack rather crossly, for somehow, though he didn't and had never wanted to, or cared much to hear anybody else play or sing, yet it had never struck him before that he was not musical, and he didn't like hearing it said of him. "But Maggie does," he went on, brightening up again—for this seemed a capital answer—"she plays the piano, and not badly either, I can tell you that."

"Indeed?" said the Katydid doubtfully—again he was busy investigating—"the general construction would hardly have led me to suppose so. True, the antennæ, as I must suppose them, are astonishingly numerous, and would catch the vibrations, but true organs of hearing seem wanting—only two pairs of legs apparently, and but one of those free. However, perhaps they are here" (by "here," apparently, he meant Maggie's elbows)—"though the *chitin* seems soft and unhealthy—apparently structureless. As for you," he continued, after a further examination of Jack, "your principal legs are not soldered, but the antennæ are remarkably short, and I don't think *you can* be musical."

"I don't know what you mean by our antennæ," said Jack, "but if you mean our hair, as you seem to, we don't hear with that, or with our legs or arms either."

"*Don't* you?" said the Katydid, as if he thought that very curious.

"Oh no, Mr Katydid," said Maggie, who could hardly help laughing. "We've got our ears to hear with, you know," and she touched them both with her fingers.

"What, those two funny flaps?" said the Katydid. "I should not have thought of them as the medium of any pleasurable sensation. However, I am glad they are useful"—and as he said this (with an emphasis on the "useful") he waved his long, slender antennæ slowly, yet gracefully, as though he thought *they* were beautiful—as indeed they were, in their own way.

"But what do *you* hear with, then?" said Maggie—she didn't see any ears on his head, certainly, but still she thought they must be there, only inside it—for as for what the Katydid had seemed to imply, she thought that could only be joking.

"What do I hear with?" said the Katydid, as if he wondered how such a question should be asked him. "Why, with my legs, to be sure—primarily," he added. "My antennæ are also efficient in a minor degree."

"Your legs and antennæ, Mr Katydid!" cried Maggie, who could hardly believe it.

"Certainly," said the Katydid, "but my legs come first, as I told you."

"But haven't you ears then?" said Maggie.

"What I mean," said the Katydid, "—though I should hardly have thought an explanation was necessary—is that my legs *are* my ears. The organs of hearing are there situated, and, to judge by my sensations, I should think they must be in my knees. As for my antennæ, they play, as I say, a secondary part only. I may not really hear with them, but they are sensitive

to aerial vibrations. Perhaps you would call it thrilling. All I know is that when our concerts are very effective I turn them this way and that, and the sounds seem to trickle all down them. In fact, I seem to thrill all over me, but I really hear with my legs.”

“How *funny*!” cried Maggie—for she thought things funny because they were new to her, as a great many quite scientific people do, too.

“Not a bit more funny than to hear with a pair of flaps,” said the Katydid.

“It isn’t quite that, you know,” said Jack, who had read a few facts in anatomy. “It’s not the ears, really, but something inside them—I mean inside the head—that we hear with.”

“Most extraordinary!” said the Katydid. “To have ears in one’s head instead of in the joints of one’s legs. Astonishing! But let us never forget,” he continued, with an impressive wave of his antennæ, “that what is unusual should not, for that reason, be received as incredible.”

“But we always hear in that way,” said Maggie. “It’s your way of hearing that seems wonderful to us.”

“That,” said the Katydid, “is the lesson which I wished to convey.”

“Oh, I see, sir,” said Maggie—and Jack too began to realise that the way in which he was made might seem as funny to the Katydid, or any other insect, as the way in which the Katydid was, did to him.

“So you’re musical, are you?” said the Katydid, reopening the conversation after a slight pause.

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” said Maggie, who was not at all a conceited girl.

“I do,” said Jack. “Yes, she is musical, Mr Katydid,

or else she couldn't play the piano. She plays it very well too. You know you do, Maggie."

"I am delighted to hear it," said the Katydid, coming nearer, and laying one of his antennæ on Maggie's shoulder. "Then we are kindred spirits, and I request that you will afford me the very great pleasure of hearing that part of you which you call your piano."

"I don't understand," said Maggie.

"He thinks you play in the same way that he does," said Jack. "He doesn't know what a piano is. How can he? He thinks it's part of you, you know."

"Oh, good gracious, no," said Maggie, with a little laugh. "My piano's not here, Mr Katydid. It's at home, and that's a long way off, now, you know, because we're in America."

The Katydid stood staring, for some time, at Maggie with his great, hard, smooth, queer-looking eyes (just like two pebbles they were, Maggie thought, that one has had cut and polished) without saying anything. Evidently he was too astonished to speak, and when, at last, he did, it was only to repeat her words.

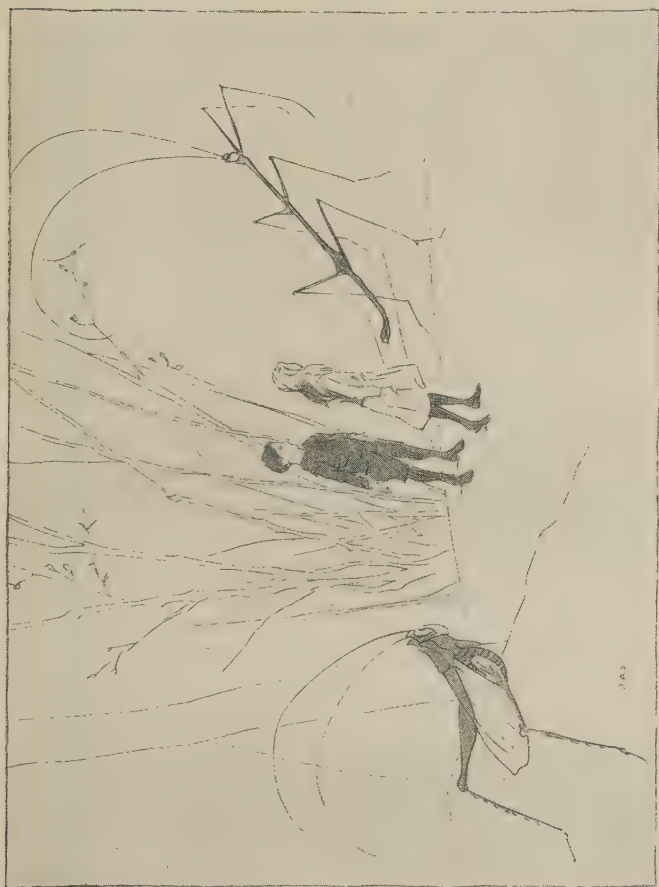
"Not here!" he cried. "Your piano's not here?"

"Oh no," said Maggie, "I left it at home, of course. I couldn't have brought it with me, because it's too big and too heavy to carry."

The Katydid was silent again for quite a long time, and then he said rather severely: "Then am I to understand that you have a musical region, but that, somehow, you take to pieces and can go about without part of you, as it were?—really, I hardly know how to express myself. So essential a part too!"

"Oh no, it isn't that, Mr Katydid," said Maggie, trying to look serious. "My piano isn't a part of me. It's something else, you know."

"Something else!" said the Katydid. "Then do you really mean to tell me that you and your musical



The stick rose slowly upon six long slender legs

region are two persons, and that one of you never goes about with the other?"

"It's not two persons," said Jack (who thought he would try to explain it), "because the piano isn't a person at all. It's a thing, and no more alive than—than that stick is."

"Thank you for the compliment," said the stick, as it rose slowly upon six long slender legs, and began to walk away—for it wasn't a stick, really, but a walking-stick-insect.

"Your illustration has failed," said the Katydid.

"*Well!*" exclaimed Jack, for he was astonished, and so was Maggie, in spite of their recent experiences. "*Well, I'm*—— Are you really alive, Mr Walking Stick?"

"Oh, it's no use trying to talk to him, now," said the Katydid. "He's too much offended. Besides, he was only introduced parenthetically—we're not in his proper chapter. So your piano," he continued, turning to Maggie, "is no more alive than that stick?"

"I meant a real stick," said Jack. "But everything here, almost, looks as if it was something else."

"It's an instrument," said Maggie, "and not alive at all. If you were to drum with your legs, or something, on a hollow tree or branch, and call that *your* instrument, it would be the same sort of thing."

"Imagine me doing so!" said the Katydid. "I should not call *that* music. No, no, true music should be a part of oneself. However," he continued, "I begin to understand what you mean, though the idea is so strange to me that it requires an effort to accept it. Many, in my position, would not accept it, for efforts of this kind are always painful, and, with inferior minds, ineffective. However—— You will excuse me if, for some moments, I allow the conversation to drop." After this the Katydid sat silent, for a little, and it was evident from the way

in which his antennæ were quivering that he was making an effort. At length he raised his head and got into a more comfortable attitude—up to then it had been very stiff and constrained.

“It is not as if I were a narrow-minded insect,” he went on. “I can accept a good deal—in fact, I have to, even amongst the members of my own family, who, of course, though often you would not think it, are more or less nearly connected with me. You see, the right way of playing is with the elytra, or wing-cases, thus”—and, as he said “thus,” the Katydid raised his, a little, and vibrated them so rapidly that their edges looked quite misty, whilst out of the mist came a shrill little sound that almost made Maggie jump (as for Jack, he was not musical). “That is the highest form of production,” he continued, stopping suddenly. “You may ask any authority—that is to say, any katydid—you like; they will all tell you the same. Still it cannot be denied that there are other ways in vogue, and that, though the result is inferior, it is yet music. I allow that, and therefore I cannot be called narrow-minded.”

“Oh no, Mr Katydid,” said Maggie, “I’m sure nobody could think that of you.” Jack, who was less polite, said nothing, but only thought to himself, “I wish he’d get on and give us his concert.”

“Yes,” continued the Katydid, “there are facts which, however peculiar, I have to accept. For instance, there is that noisy fellow, the cicada, so persistent in his babble, which I yet allow to be music—of a sort. He produces *his* effects—such as they are—by something inside his abdomen, which he keeps on clicking—in fact, by a sort of rattle, though I believe *he* calls it a drum. That is very different”—again the elytra went up, and again Maggie very nearly jumped—“from the play of one

delicately articulated surface on another. Rattles and drums! No, it is not from such instruments that refined effects are to be expected."

"I wish he wouldn't speak quite so grandly," muttered Jack to himself, and even Maggie couldn't help thinking, "It *is* funny that insects should be so conceited."

"Then there are the grasshoppers," the Katydid went on. "*They* scrape their hind legs against the outer surface of their wing-coverts—just as if there wasn't an inner one! Indeed there are some—*Pneumora*, I think *their* name is—who don't even employ their wing-coverts for this purpose at all, but have a little notched ridge on each side of their body, to move their legs up and down on—a very awkward substitution, you will admit. The results, of course, are in accordance."

"Oh, it's all very well," said Jack, who began to think that the Katydid was having it too much his own way, "but why shouldn't that be as good as scraping them against their wing-coverts—or as scraping two wing-coverts against each other, if it comes to that?"

The Katydid looked at Jack as though he had a very good answer to give, if he thought it worth while to, but all he said was, "You see, *you* are not musical," and then he turned to Maggie, again, as if she could understand him better. "These are, all of them, very strange ways of producing music," he said, "and it requires an effort to believe that it can be so, even after one has seen it oneself. But it is nothing—absolutely nothing—to the effort one has to make in order to believe in a creature whose musical region isn't even a part of himself."

“I suppose it seems funny to you,” said Maggie.

“Funny!” said the Katydid. “However, I have made the effort, so I do believe in him—even,” he added, with a rather sharp look at Maggie, “though I haven’t yet heard him play.”

“You needn’t keep saying ‘him,’” said Jack, who was getting a little impatient, “because it’s ‘her,’ you see. *I’m* ‘him,’ you know. Maggie’s my sister.”

“What?” cried the Katydid, quivering his antennæ again, as if he had another great effort to make. “Then am I to understand that *you* represent the female?”

“I’m a girl, and not a boy, if that’s what you mean,” answered Maggie.

“Well!” said the Katydid, “and yet you’re the one who plays. A strange reversal of the established laws of nature. Fancy a female Katydid playing!—but I am becoming used to anomalies.”

“To what?” said Jack.

“To things that don’t happen with us,” said the Katydid. “That makes them anomalies, you know. However,” he continued, “since one of you can’t play, and the other has left whatever she plays with, behind, it’s quite evident that *you* can’t invite *me* to a concert. So I’ll invite you, again—that was my first idea, you know.”

“Oh, thank you, Mr Katydid,” said Jack and Maggie, both together. They were tired of trying to explain themselves, and thought listening to music would be much nicer.

“It’s over there,” said the Katydid, pointing to an open space in the forest, with trees and bushes all round it. “Shall we hop?”

“Hop?” said Jack in surprise.

"Certainly," said the Katydid—"that is, if you can. You can't fly, you say."

"I can hop on one leg," said Jack, "but it's rather far for that."

"Oh, it's much too far for me," said Maggie, who had her skirts to think of. "I'm sure I could never do it."

"Not in that absurd way," said the Katydid. "One leg indeed! I meant with two, as I do, of course. However, I don't see how *you* are to hop," he continued, looking at Maggie in a puzzled way, and then he added, as if speaking to himself, "Really, the difference between them is most remarkable. One has a well-defined pair, while the other's are masked—at least partially. Well, then"—this was aloud again—"I suppose the only way is to crawl."

"Crawl indeed!" said Jack. "Why, we'll walk, of course. Legs are to walk with, you know."

"*I* know that mine are to crawl or to hop with," said the Katydid. "But nature, as I said before, is full of anomalies, and perhaps the best mode of settling it would be for all three of us to get there in his own way."

CHAPTER X

JACK AND MAGGIE GO TO A CONCERT

THAT was just the way in which they all of them did get there, and as soon as they were there the Katydid said, "Allow me to introduce you to one of my leaders—also to another—in fact, to all of them."

"Delighted," said a voice at Maggie's elbow, which was just like the Katydid's own, and, in a moment, another katydid, that might have been he, was standing in front of her. It raised itself upon its hind pair of legs, which were the long, hopping ones, and made both her and Jack a polite bow, and almost before they had had time to return it—for they were not much accustomed to ceremonial observances—there was quite a little circle of katydids standing about them, whilst others kept straggling up through the grass, or flying down from the trees.

"I'm glad they're all friendly," Maggie couldn't help saying to Jack, for, though they were not at all the sort of insects to be frightened of, yet, with their antennæ, they were very much taller than they were, and their jaws looked big enough to have snapped either of them in two, almost, if they had wanted to—besides, there were so many of them.

"Oh, it's all right," said Jack. "It's only a band, you know, and they'll begin playing very soon."

"Not so near to us, I hope," said Maggie. "I'm sure we shall be quite deafened by the noise, if they don't all go farther off."

"I beg your pardon," said one of the leaders very

politely, and bowing as he spoke, "but by 'noise' I presume you mean the volume of sound."

Maggie said that she did, which seemed to relieve both him, and several other katydid who had overheard her, very much, and she was soon reassured upon this point, for, all at once, *the* Katydid—by which, of course, is meant the first one, who had now crawled on to the top of a tall grass-stem, so as to be distinguished from the rest—called out in a shrill, high-pitched voice, "Leaders, to your places!" and then there was a great rustling and whirring of wings, as all the leaders flew back to their trees.

"They occupy a raised dais," explained the Katydid to Maggie. "That's why they flew up so high."

"But they didn't all go so very high," Jack objected. "I saw some of them fly into bushes."

"The others are under them," said the Katydid, and added severely, "Not being musical, I cannot expect *you* to follow me."

"But——" began Jack.

"Ssh!" said the Katydid, and then, raising his voice again, "Are you ready?" This, of course, was to the leaders, and immediately, from the trees and bushes all about, there were shrill little answering cries of "Yes. Yes. Ready. Ready."

"Well then—tune up!"

Instantly the air was full of sounds, which, though they were all of one kind, and all seemed to be saying "Katy did," or "Katy did, she did," in some way or other, yet reminded Maggie very much of the noise an orchestra makes before it begins the first piece. "Not that it's really like it," she said to herself, "but it seems as if they were all getting ready for something better."

“What a lot of katydids there must be!” said Jack.
 “Quite a hundred, I should think.”

“A hundred!” exclaimed the Katydid contemptuously. “It would be a very poor concert if there were not more performers than that. Why, I should be ashamed to conduct it. Those are only the leaders, and each one of them will lead a hundred or more.”

“But it sounds all over the place,” said Jack.

“So it is,” said the Katydid. “The leaders lead the companies, you see, and as the companies are distributed, they have to be, too; but until they are properly followed, the full effect must be wanting.”

“I see,” said Maggie.”

“I daresay *you* do,” said the Katydid, “and *you* may have noticed that the notes, at present, are scattered, and defective in rhythm. That is always the case in the earlier phases. Each leader, you see, gives the note to his company, and, until the companies join, symphonic effects are not studied. Attention!” This, of course, was not to Maggie, but to the other katydids, and, immediately afterwards, he called out (as conductor, of course; he had a little stick of grass-stalk as a baton, now, in his right forefoot, and was using it in quite the right way), “Companies A—Begin! There,” he continued, turning again to Maggie—but he had to speak very loud indeed now, for either the companies were very large, or there were a very great many of them, and the “volume of sound” was terrific—“that’s on the one note, you see.”

“So it is,” said Maggie, who had really a good ear.
 “It’s *do*, I think.”

“Precisely,” said the Katydid, “the emphatic or accented note. The next will be *sol*. I see *you* know something about it. Attention!” he cried again.

"Companies B — Leaders look to the rhythm— Now!"

There was a tremendous crash as the Katydid said "Now!" and it seemed as if every leaf on every tree and bush had a katydid sitting on it, who were all answering each other in two notes, *do* and *sol*. The *sols* and *dos* did not come from two different parts of the forest, but each of them from all about, only all the musicians who said "Katy did" on the one note, said it together, and were immediately answered by those who said it on the other, and so it went on, like a see-saw.

"There!" said the Katydid, coming down from his grass-stem—for he had to speak into Maggie's ear now, for her to be able to hear him—"I think they may be left to themselves for a little, now. A fine performance, is it not?"

"Oh yes, it is," said Maggie, and after a pause, during which she was trying to think of a word that would do, she added, "I think it's magnificent."

"I see *you are* musical," said the Katydid. "Any questions that *you* may ask——"

He put such a strong accent upon the "you" that Maggie looked suddenly round at Jack, who was a little behind her, and she saw that he had his fingers in his ears. "Do take them out," she said hastily. "Remember we're his guests, and besides, it really is very pretty"—and indeed, now that she had got a little more used to the uproar, she was beginning to think that it was. "But why are there such a lot of companies for only two notes?" she said to the Katydid—for he had told her she might ask him questions. "If every leader leads a company there must be hundreds of them."

"So there are," the Katydid answered, "but they needn't all have a different note, on that account. Two

are sufficient for the words, you see. More would be unadapted to the simplicity of the story. You see there is the literary, as well as the musical aspect, to be considered."

"But wouldn't two companies be enough, then?" asked Maggie.

"Oh no," answered the Katydid, "that would never do. You see, it's not as if all the performers who come in on the one note sat together in the same place. Some sit here and some there, as I said before."

"But what are all the companies for, then," asked Maggie, "if they don't have a note apiece?"

"What are they for!" said the Katydid. "Why, what are regiments of soldiers for? You may have seen them amongst the ants. There must be order, of course, and discipline. You see, there are thousands of us, but it would be impossible for any leader to lead so many at once—I myself could not, even—so they are divided into companies—bands, perhaps, would be a more exact designation—the *do* bands and the *sol* bands—and there are hundreds of each of them. As to whether they play well or not, I leave that to you to decide. If you are musical you can only have one opinion, of course, but pray express yourself freely."

"Oh, I think they play splendidly," said Maggie. It was really her opinion, but she was very glad that it was, for, after what the Katydid had said, it would have been difficult to tell him that she thought they played badly. "We both think so," she added, with a look at Jack, who had taken his fingers out of his ears now. "It is pretty, Jack, isn't it?"

"Oh, never mind him," said the Katydid. "He is not musical, and one never asks a mole cricket what

he thinks about the sun—that's one of our proverbs, you know."

"But I really do like it, Mr Katydid," said Jack.

"Time, on these occasions," said the Katydid, speaking to Maggie, "is too valuable to be wasted, and I have a question to ask *you* which *you* will appreciate."

"Have you, Mr Katydid?" said Maggie, feeling rather uncomfortable—for she thought to herself, "Supposing I shouldn't know what to say, or should make the wrong answer?"

"Yes," said the Katydid, "and it is not one to be answered lightly. Take your own time, please, and give it your full consideration. I shall not think the worse of you for that."

"Thank you," said Maggie—she didn't feel very grateful, but it was all she could think of to say.

"Above all," the Katydid continued, "don't be nervous. The question is this, which of the two notes do you prefer, the *sol* or the *do*? Now take your time."

"Which of the two?" repeated Maggie, who thought it a very difficult question indeed.

"Yes," said the Katydid, "that of Companies A or Companies B? Each, of course, has its merits. That of Companies A—the *sol*, you know—has more flexibility; it varies, as you will have observed, from one to five half-tones below the other, though five is the most conspicuous. It has, therefore, the advantage of variety, but, on the other hand, Companies B's note is more unisonal and definite. It is firmer, with the accentuation more pronounced. I speak, of course, as a musician, but as you are one also, you will be able to follow me."

"It's more than I can do," said Jack. "I'm sure I don't know what he's talking about."

"I don't think it's so difficult as it sounds," said Maggie, but she was puzzled, all the same, and wished either that the Katydid was not quite so musical, or that she herself was a little more advanced. "They're both very nice," she said at last.

"Of that there can be no question whatever," said the Katydid, "but I will wait for the rest of your answer."

"The first one is the loudest, I think," said Maggie, feeling that she must say something—"that is," she corrected herself—for the Katydid didn't seem to think "loud" a sufficiently grand word—"the most accentuated."

"I told you *that*," said the Katydid

"And it seems to me," she continued—she stopped to listen, again, for a second or two, and then she felt sure of it—"it seems to me that more katydids come in on that one than on the other."

"It is undoubtedly the most popular of the two," said the Katydid, looking quite pleased. "There has been some rivalry and difference of opinion—unanimity on any point is rare, you know—but, on the whole, it commands a fuller orchestra than the other. If you like, I will tell you a secret. If *I* were performing, now, instead of conducting—or instead of talking to you *instead* of conducting—it is the one I would choose to join in on. You would find me more often amongst Companies A than amongst Companies B."

"Really, Mr Katydid?" said Maggie.

"Yes, really," said the Katydid, "and I think I may call myself, without any vanity, a musical connoisseur. But what I want to know is what *you* think."

It was easy, from this, for Maggie to know the answer that the Katydid would have liked her to make, but she

was not a courtier, and so, as she had made up her mind, by this time, that she didn't like either of the notes, by itself, better than the other one, but that it was the two together, which made the see-saw, that she really liked, she was just going to say this when something happened which made both her and the Katydid forget all about it. The night—for somehow it was night now—had been quite still till then, but, all at once, there was a gust of wind, and immediately the whole concert was thrown into disorder. Hundreds of katydids at once left off playing, and the greater number of those that went on began to play out of time. In short, there was nothing but confusion, so that the concert, properly speaking, came to an end.

"Oh dear!" cried Maggie, "what can be happening?"—for the place where they were standing was sheltered by the trees, and she didn't know what it was that had upset the performance. "Why have so many left off?"

"Oh, the wind, the wind!" cried the Katydid, in great agitation, and running up his grass-stem again. "It throws out everything, and it's always coming, so I might have expected it, with guests, of course."

"Is it the wind?" said Maggie.

"Of course it is," said the Katydid. "Why, don't you see the trees swaying? Who could play properly in such a gust as that? If we had wind instruments it might be different—we would be properly adapted for it then. But we katydids are violinists. We belong to the higher class of performers, and we suffer for it accordingly. Oh dear, oh dear! It catches our wing-cases, which are our violins, don't you see?"

"Never mind," said Maggie sympathetically—Jack, who was not pleased at the way in which he had been left out of the conversation, and still less at some of the

remarks which the Katydid had made, was not sympathetic at all—in fact he was laughing—"never mind; perhaps it will drop, you know. I think it is dropping a little."

"I shouldn't have minded under ordinary circumstances," the Katydid continued. "We have to get accustomed to it, and we do. Yesterday I shouldn't have minded, and to-morrow I sha'n't, but to think that a concert given by me in *your* honour should be spoilt in this way! I shall never hold up my antennæ again."

"Oh yes, you will," said Maggie. "Besides, the wind *is* dropping, I'm sure. Some of them are going on quite nicely again."

"You remind me of my duty," said the Katydid, raising his antennæ as he spoke—they had been in a very drooping state before. "I must encourage them. Thank you. We have all our duties to perform, and a Katydid should not allow it to be said that he was daunted by anything." He then called out, as loud as he could, "Leaders, hold the rhythm! Companies, follow your leaders! Time, gentlemen, time! Keep the measure! No straggling!" and so on; and, before so very long, the whole concert was going on again just as well as it had been before. All this time the wind had been falling, and when, at last, there was quite a lull, with hardly a breath of air stirring, the Katydid came down again.

"Capital!" he said. "Capital! Who could have thought that they would have recovered themselves so quickly? But it's wonderful what a little exertion can do. You remarked it, I suppose, both of you?"

"Oh yes," said Maggie. "I heard every word you said."

"So did I," said Jack, "but it wasn't so much that, you know."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Katydid in an annoyed tone of voice—so annoyed, indeed, that Maggie said, "Oh, don't make him angry, Jack, or everything will come to an end. He's the conductor, you see," she added.

"As for that," Jack answered, "*I* don't believe he's anything to do with it."

"Explain that remark," said the Katydid, "or else withdraw it. You must do one or the other, you know, if you don't want to be turned out."

"I think you'd better withdraw it, Jack," said Maggie, who didn't at all like the turn things were taking. "It wouldn't be nice to be turned out, you know."

"I won't withdraw it," said Jack, "and I can explain it very well. What I mean, Mr Katydid," he continued, "is this, that it would all be going on just the same, even if you weren't here, and as for your conducting the others, or getting them into order again, just now, they got out of order because of the wind, and they would have been all right again, as soon as it dropped, anyhow."

"He has explained it," said the Katydid triumphantly, looking at Maggie. "So now, as he's not musical, we can go on talking to each other again. They're all right now, till the next gust, and then I can help them again, as before. Well, and what do you think of the concert?"

"Oh, I think it's a beautiful concert," said Maggie. "I'm sure they all play beautifully."

"Did you hear anybody out of tune?" asked the Katydid. "You needn't mind saying so, if you did."

"No, I don't think I did," said Maggie. "You see, it's just those two notes."

"Of course it is," said the Katydid. "Others may prefer one only, but give *me* variety. And what's your opinion of the time?"

"Oh, I think it's very good," Maggie answered.

"Perfect," said the Katydid, "but perhaps you didn't count the beats."

"No, I don't think I did," said Maggie.

"Thirty-four double ones in a minute, *always*," said the Katydid, "and the single ones come to sixty-eight."

"Oh, it's splendid," said Maggie, "and if it hadn't been for the wind, just now——"

" 'A sharp gust,' said the Katydid, just as if he were reading out of a book—perhaps he was, as he was in one—'upsets the whole orchestra, and confusion results.' Still, I think you must have detected the efforts of the leaders—or first violinists, as perhaps you would call them—who, in spite of adverse circumstances, 'succeeded in holding the time measure, and soon drew the others into the regular beat.'"

"Oh yes, I heard them, I'm sure," said Maggie, "and I think it was very clever of them."

"That and conducting," said the Katydid, "are the two most onerous duties that can fall to the lot of a katydid. And now, perhaps, you would like to make some suggestions. You may, you know, as you're musical."

Maggie had only one suggestion to make, and she had been wanting to make it for some time, but had not quite liked to; but, with this encouragement, she thought she would. "Please, Mr Katydid," she said, "couldn't there be another tune?"

"Why?" said the Katydid, as if he didn't at all see why himself.

"Oh, I don't know," said Maggie, "only at most concerts there are several different things."

"That is not our way," said the Katydid. "You see, we have one thing to say and one way of saying it. If we said it in several it would be less impressive."

"But two notes are so few," said Maggie.

"Few!" cried the Katydid. "Was ever such a remark made before? Why, there are only four words, counting the repetition, which makes one note to each two, or half a note to each."

"But even if you only used two notes at a time," persisted Maggie, "they might sometimes be different."

"They might if we were," said the Katydid, "but, thank goodness, we're not. No, no, we are always katydids, and, having a duty to perform, we perform it in a straightforward manner. We owe it to society, you know."

"Owe what?" said Maggie.

"Why, the truth, to be sure," said the Katydid. "You believe in telling the truth, don't you? But perhaps you don't."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Maggie angrily. "The truth has got nothing to do with a concert."

"It has everything to do with our concerts," said the Katydid, "and I am sorry indeed if it is not the same with yours. Of all falsehoods a concerted one is the most reprehensible."

"Of course it is," said Maggie, "but that's not what I meant. One sings stories at a concert, you know, and——"

"I should be sorry to do so," said the Katydid. "If *that's* not a concerted falsehood, then I don't know what is."

"It isn't," said Maggie indignantly. "Ballads, I mean, and they may be true; but even if they're not, one can sing them without telling stories."

"But not without singing them, which is as bad," said the Katydid.

"Of course you can," said Maggie, "that is—I mean, not in that way. What I mean," she went on, feeling that she was getting confused, "is that everything one sings at a concert needn't be true, and even if it is true——"

"If indeed!" said the Katydid. "You don't deny it, I suppose, do you?"

He said this so fiercely that Maggie felt quite frightened, and gave a start. "Deny what?" she said.

"Why, that she *did* do it," the Katydid answered. "It's never been denied yet, to my knowledge, and if it were to be, after all this time, I couldn't answer for the consequences."

"Oh dear, Mr Katydid," said Maggie, looking anxiously round, to see if her brother were listening, but he was angry at being left out of everything, and had put his fingers into his ears again, "I should never think of denying it, of course not; but if you didn't mind" (for she was getting a little nervous), "I would like to ask you a question."

"Would you?" said the Katydid. "Then ask it—that is, if it's a fair one."

"Oh, I hope you won't mind it, sir," said Maggie. "It's nothing very particular—at least—please, Mr Katydid, what *did* Katy do?"

"Do you call *that* a fair question?" said the Katydid. "Why, it's a secret, of course."

"A secret?" said Maggie.

"To be sure it is," said the Katydid, "and one of the very greatest ones that there has ever been in the world, because, you see, it has never been divulged."

"Hasn't it, really?" said Maggie.

"Never," answered the Katydid. "It has been kept for thousands—I may say hundreds of thousands—of years, ever since the incident took place, in fact; an extraordinary thing, considering what numbers have been privy to it."

"But if you all know it——" said Maggie.

"You see, it's a family secret," the Katydid explained. "We keep it entirely to ourselves. To allow it to transpire beyond just our own circle would be the greatest solecism that a katydid could commit."

"Oh dear," said Maggie, "then I'm sure I'll never ask one of them again."

"It would be no use if you did," said the Katydid, "not the slightest. If you were to keep prying and asking about it, and trying to find out, all your life, you wouldn't be one bit the wiser when you died—only, as it *is* a secret, that would be in very bad taste. All that I—all that any of us are at liberty to tell you—is that she *did* do it, that 'Katy *did*, she did.'

" Here he scraped his wing-cases very loudly, and it seemed as if every other katydid in the forest scraped his very loudly too—louder even than they had been doing it before—for the whole air seemed to echo and re-echo with the shrill scream of "Katy *did*, she did!"

"There, you hear?" said the Katydid. "They all say so. There's not one of them that isn't positive, and if anyone were to deny it I can't tell you what would happen."

"Why, what would happen, Mr Katydid?" said Maggie, for she couldn't imagine why anything should.

"Haven't I just said I can't tell you?" said the Katydid.

"I don't believe anything would," said Jack, all of a sudden—he had taken his fingers out of his ears, and had been listening to the last part of the conversation.

"You'd better not try it," said the Katydid. "It would bring this concert to an end, for one thing."

"Would it?" said Jack. "Well, I shouldn't mind if it did, for I'm tired of the concert, and so I'm going to try. Yes, I am, Maggie"—for Maggie was doing what she could to prevent him—"and if it does, so much the better. But it's all nonsense," he continued, "for they don't really say 'Katy did' at all. It's only just the wing-cases rubbing that sounds a little like that, but they're not really words, and there never was such a Katy, so she couldn't have done anything."

At this there was a tremendous commotion, the Katydid threw down his baton, and the whole concert seemed to stop with a bang. "Run, Maggie!" cried Jack, "something's going to happen," and, as he said this, the whole tribe of katydids, as it seemed—there were so many of them—rose out of the trees and bushes, and came flying towards them, their wings shimmering in the moonlight. "Quick, quick," cried Jack again, "or they'll catch us!" but, run as they would, the katydids flew a great deal faster, and the whirring of their wings sounded louder and louder, till at last it was like a great whirlwind. Every moment they expected to be bitten, but the funny thing was that, though they went so slowly, and the katydids so fast, yet somehow they always seemed to be just in front of the katydids, and the katydids just behind them. Still, the danger was very great (which made it all the more curious), and Jack

caught hold of Maggie's hand, to help her along, and kept saying, all the time they were running, "Faster, Maggie, do run a little faster, or they'll catch us."

"But why don't they catch us?" said Maggie. "It seems very curious that they shouldn't, when they're going ever so much more quickly than we are."

"It's too far on in the book for them, that's what it must be," said Jack. "We're almost through the chapter, I expect, and they mayn't go quite to the end of it. A few lines between us, you know, would keep them off, whatever we were both doing."

"Then we needn't run," said Maggie.

"Oh yes, we'd better," said Jack. "They don't come in the next chapter at all—it's the cicadas, I know—and if we could get into that we'd be safe."

"But how are we to?" said Maggie. "It's all a forest, and we don't know the way."

"This is your safest way," said a voice which did not sound like any they had heard before—it was certainly not the Katydid's.

"Where?" cried Jack and Maggie, in a breath—and they both stopped, for it was not only a good deal darker, now, than it had been before, but they had got into such a thick tuft of grass that they could hardly get on, though the katydids were still only just behind them.

"Why, here, to be sure," said the voice again—it was a fat, choky voice, and seemed to come from right underneath them—"and you'd better make haste, too—that is, if you don't *want* to be bitten. Here! here! here!"

"But where *is* 'here'?" said Jack. "I don't see anything, and it's getting too dark to see at all."

"Put your feet together, and jump," said the voice.

“It’s still light enough for that. Then you’ll come down by the lift, which is quicker—unless you prefer the staircase.”

But both Jack and Maggie wanted to be quick, so they put their feet together, and jumped. They didn’t go up very far, but when they came down they kept on going down, for what seemed ever such a time. When they stopped, at last, they were not at all hurt, but they had no idea where they were, for it was darker now than the very darkest night they had ever been in—in fact there was *no* light, as Maggie said to Jack, in a very melancholy tone.

“Not even a glowworm,” said the same voice that had been speaking to them before, “I don’t employ them, you know.”

“I wish you did,” said Maggie.

“It’s their own fault,” the voice answered, “they never come down here, so they can’t expect me to. But never mind,” it continued, “in less than two years you’ll begin to go up, again, with me, and we’ll all come out in the next chapter, together.”

“Two years!” cried Jack and Maggie, both at once, and both in a very distressed state of mind. “Two years before we get up again!”

“Oh, it won’t be quite so quickly as that,” said the voice. “Two years before we begin to is what I said. One must be reasonable. It takes a little time to become a cicada, but when I *have* become one, you won’t think it long.”

“Perhaps *you* won’t,” said Jack.

“I’m sure I sha’n’t,” said the Cicada (for he was one even now, though he didn’t seem to think so). “No, no, we will not grudge the time spent in achieving so great a result.”

"But how long shall we have to stay here, then?" said Maggie, in a very agitated tone of voice.

"Let me see," said the Cicada. "There are six stages at intervals of one, two, three and four years—that is, approximately. The whole journey, with return ticket, occupies seventeen years, but as you started later, and caught up—I should say down—by the lift, you'll be out a little sooner. So cheer up—punctuality may be relied on."

"Punctuality indeed!" said Jack; and Maggie began to cry, she felt so wretched. "Oh, Jack!" she sobbed, "seventeen years down in this horrid dark hole in the earth, without seeing anything!"

"Not quite seventeen," said the Cicada consolingly, "and there is nothing to complain of in the hole, which I made myself. As for not seeing anything, you *could* only see me, you know, even if there were a glowworm, and, to tell you the truth, I am not yet in a state to *be* seen. After my sixth stage, however—which is the final one—I shall be quite presentable, and you can then make up for lost time. So cheer up. It's what every cicada has to go through, you know."

"But *I'm not* a cicada," sobbed Maggie, "and to be kept here for seventeen years, without being one—I think it's a shame."

"Why, what's seventeen years in a book?" said the Cicada. "The space allotted to this portion of my life-history is most inadequate. We shall be up in no time. There! upon my word, we're off already."

It was quite true, they were going up, and, almost before the Cicada had done speaking, a voice which did not sound at all like his, called out, "First stage," on which they stopped rather suddenly.

"I must get a new hole," said the Cicada hastily, and

then exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment, "but there! we're off again. These compendiums leave one no time for anything. Disgraceful scamping, I call it."

Sure enough, the lift—for that was what it seemed like—was once more beginning to rise, and it had only gone a very little way when the voice that had called out, "First stage" before, now called out, "Second stage," and then added, "We will step lightly over the subsequent stages passed by this insect in its subterranean abode, before it emerges, in early summer, a perfect and light-loving cicada."

Then there were several small jerks, one after the other, followed by a sudden rush of sunlight, and the underground journey had come to an end.

CHAPTER XI

A VERY CLASSICAL INSECT

"YOU may look at me *now*, if you want to," said the Cicada—his voice had a much more musical quality in it, now that they had got into the open air again; in fact, it was very pleasant, and he seemed to sing what he said—"I should have been ashamed for you to see me whilst we were down there, but now I'm not, in the least."

"But why were you ashamed then?" asked Maggie. "I suppose you were just the same there as you are here."

"Oh, dear me, no," said the Cicada. "I was in *deshabille* then, you know, but now I'm in full *toilette*. Well, and what do you think of me? Take care, though, or you'll fall off—both of you!"

It was only then that Jack and Maggie began to notice where they were, and they were rather surprised, at first, to find that they were up a tree. How high the tree was they couldn't tell, as they were much too small to be able to see the ground, by looking down, or even the trunk, which was hidden by numbers of leafy branches that looked as large as tree-trunks to them. But as they saw the sky, which was as blue as could be, with the sun shining, when they looked up, they knew they were near the top of it, amongst quite a forest of small twigs, on every one of which sat not one merely, but sometimes a dozen cicadas—so many that they soon got tired of counting them—all singing away as loud as ever they could, which was very loud



“Take care, or you’ll fall off—both of you,” said the Cicada

indeed, so that the whole air was in a state of vibration, and the very leaves seemed to shake with the sound, when they were not shaking in the breeze. Neither Jack nor Maggie had ever seen a live cicada before, but Maggie, who had not even seen a dead one, as far as she remembered, and had read much less about them than Jack had, was much the more surprised of the two. "Oh, Jack," she cried, as she fixed herself comfortably in the fork of a twig on one side of the Cicada, whilst Jack fixed himself on the other, "what funny-looking insects they are! What broad heads they have, and great goggle eyes, with such a funny expression. All the rest of them seems to be wings, I don't see any body. I suppose there is one, but the wings cover it up like a penthouse. They seem to be all wings and head."

"You will excuse me if I answer you in song," said the Cicada, "since I have no other vehicle of expression. If you think *that* a defect, I'm sorry, because it's an incurable one."

"Is it?" said Maggie, in a doubtful tone of voice, for she didn't quite know whether to feel sorry or not.

"Absolutely," replied the Cicada. "There is no cure whatever for genius."

"I'm very sorry——" Maggie was beginning—for now she felt sure that there was something the matter—but Jack, who was of a less sympathetic disposition, and wanted to get on, broke in with, "Oh, never mind, Mr Cicada, we'll put up with the singing."

"You must, if you put up with me," said the Cicada. "However, if you're of a poetical temperament you'll find that easy."

• "Oh, I daresay we will," said Jack confidently ;

"besides, we've got to up here, you know"—he might well say that, for the tree itself was like a forest, and both it and the forest outside it seemed full of cicadas.

"But what about your answer, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie; "you were going to say something about your body, you know."

"True," said the Cicada, "but *that* need not detain us long. Another part of me is much more worth talking about."

"You mean your wings, sir, I suppose," said Maggie.

"They are well enough," the Cicada answered, "but it is not with them that I soar. Yes," he continued, opening them all of a sudden and showing it to them, "I have a body, though, as far as my sensations go, I might almost as well have none. That, indeed, was the opinion of the ancient Greeks, the people who, of all others, have best understood me. They were so struck with my qualities of soul that they concluded there could be no room for anything else. One of their poets—and he was the greatest of them all—declared me to be 'fleshless and painless, loved by the Muses'—whom perhaps you have heard of—and 'almost equal to the gods.' However, he was mistaken in the first particular—at least I have something which you, I suppose, would call flesh, though it is of a much lighter and more delicate material than your own. As for pain, I don't quite understand what that means, but I believe that some disagreeable sensation is referred to, from which I am totally free."

"Are you, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie. "I thought you said you had something that was incurable."

"True," said the Cicada, "and perhaps that *is* pain-

ful sometimes—the actual throes of it, as I may say—for, you know, extremes meet. Do you agree with me?”

“I—I’ve heard so,” said Maggie, “but I don’t quite know what you mean, Mr Cicada.”

“Perhaps not,” said the Cicada. “But the ancient Greeks would have.”

This was not a bit more intelligible to Maggie—or to Jack either—than the Cicada’s last remark had been, and when he went on to say, “But I can make allowances,” they were puzzled again.

“Why do you talk so much about the ancient Greeks?” asked Jack, after a pause, which was filled up by the Cicada with singing.

“Sing about them, I presume you mean,” said the Cicada. “That is the only kind of talking that I understand. Well, I should be ungrateful, you know, if I didn’t sing of them a little, sometimes, as they were always singing of me. Besides, as I told you, it was they, of all peoples, who best understood me.”

“I didn’t know they were entomologists,” said Jack. “I never heard of either a Greek or a Roman one.”

“True, they made mistakes about me sometimes,” the Cicada continued, “but they were generally in my favour. They thought I had no flesh, you know, as I told you, but, after all, I have got something of that sort—call it what you will. However, I suppose what they meant was that I was all spirit, which, of course, was a very great compliment. Then, again, their idea was that I sipped the dew. They *said* I got drunk with it. I know what they meant by that, well enough.”

“What did they mean by it?” asked Jack.

“I’m not sure that you would understand,” the

Cicada answered, "but if you ever *have* heard of inspiration——"

"Oh, I think I've heard of it," said Jack, trying to think what it meant. "Yes, I have, I'm sure. It's when you—when you——"

"Ah!" said the Cicada, "well, I think they meant that."

"Wasn't it rude of them to say so?" asked Maggie.

"Rude? Oh no," said the Cicada—"or if it was, I forgive them. You must consider the underlying meaning, you know."

Jack made another effort to think what "inspiration" did mean, but all he could feel sure about was that it had something to do with breathing. "And why *that* should be a compliment——" he said in an undertone to Maggie.

"Hush!" said Maggie, who had more ideas about such things than Jack had, being a little older, "I believe what he means is that the Greeks thought him clever."

"I wish he'd talk more about his habits," said Jack. "It's the natural history part of insects that *I* like"—he was beginning to forget all about collecting, which shows how much a few conversations had improved him.

"Perhaps he will," said Maggie, "in a little."

"See if you can't get him to, Maggie," said Jack, for somehow he was beginning to think that the Cicada, like the Katydid, cared more about talking to Maggie than to him, perhaps because *he* was musical, too.

"Then don't you really sip the dew, Mr Cicada?" Maggie asked—for that was about his habits.

"Why, no," said the Cicada, "not exactly, but it was a pretty idea, was it not?"

"Then what do you eat and drink?" Maggie went on.

"Eat!" cried the Cicada, with a little trill. "Oh, really! The ancient Greeks would never have asked me *that* question."

"Not if they knew, of course," said Maggie. "But then I don't."

"He's like the butterflies, I suppose," said Jack. "They only drink, you know."

"The butterflies!" trilled the Cicada again—he was always trilling—"oh dear, no, I am not like them" (which, indeed, was quite true), "nor anything. A cicada only resembles a cicada."

"But the butterflies are very pretty, you know," said Maggie gently.

"Poor, dumb, dressed-up things!" said the Cicada. "But they have their place in nature—that I admit. They are showy, they please the eye, and if the gift of song has been denied them, *that*, at least, is *not* their fault."

"I think they're very nice insects," said Maggie.

"I'm glad you take their part," said the Cicada. "For myself, I have always defended them. They have been criticised, I know—and severely—but it belongs to a cicada to be tolerant."

"I thought everyone liked butterflies," said Maggie.

"I, at least, know how to estimate them," the Cicada answered. "As I say, they have their place in nature."

"But I think it's a very good place," said Maggie.

"I'm delighted to hear your charitable opinion," said the Cicada, and added, after trilling to himself, a little, "A certain emblematical position was, indeed, accorded them by the ancient Greeks, though they were not honoured like ourselves."

“Did they really think so much of you, Mr Cicada?” asked Maggie—she saw it was no use trying to talk about the butterflies.

“*Did* they indeed!” said the Cicada. “That *is* a question, after what I’ve been telling you. ‘All but equal to the gods’—what do you think of that?”

“I don’t know,” said Maggie—and indeed that was all that either she or Jack could make of it.

“You’ve heard of the Muses, I suppose,” the Cicada continued. “They were the goddesses of music and poetry, you know, and other things of a high kind. Well, we cicadas had a great deal to do with them. Why, we used to go up to where they lived—Olympus, you know—and whisper to them privately. That was being familiar, was it not? As for Apollo, who was even more distinguished than the Muses—he was the sun-god, you know, and the greatest musician of all—well, we were sacred to him. Just fancy! That was being honoured, I think.”

“But do you believe in it all, Mr Cicada?” asked Maggie.

“It was what the ancient Greeks used to say, at any rate,” said the Cicada. “They were a very clever people, and even if it wasn’t true it shows what they thought of us.”

“It was a lot of stories and fables,” said Jack, “and as for the ancient Greeks, they may have been very clever, but they weren’t good entomologists. Besides, they’re all dead now,” he went on.

“I hope you believe in immortality,” said the Cicada, gravely—at least his voice would have been grave if he could have made it so, because, of course, it was a serious question. “Some things never die, you know.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with it,” said Jack,

"and besides, it's not what I mean, about those stories, you know. What I mean is, that it's not the present time, and so——"

"Isn't it?" said the Cicada. "*I* thought it was."

"I mean it wasn't then," explained Jack. "It was a long time ago, in another country, and not here. Where we are now is America, which isn't even the Old World."

"It seems quite the old world to me," said the Cicada. "I've been singing here ever since I came up, and it only seemed new for the first minute—if then."

"It's the New World, anyhow," said Jack, "at least it's called so, and the ancient Greeks lived in Greece, which is in the old one, of course, and——"

"So they did, so they did," said the Cicada, "and we lived there with them. Those were our golden days—I may well call them so. The Athenians—who were the best of all the Greeks—used to wear us in their hair, that is to say, they had beautiful golden bodkins, that were made like us at the end—a golden cicada—tettixes they were called—Tettix was one of our names, you may have heard—and only Athenians might wear them; they were forbidden to strangers as not being worthy to do so. For this reason the Athenians were called *Tettigophoræ*, or wearers of the tettix, because they were allowed to—so of course they did. It was a very great privilege to have *us* for an emblem."

"Oh, it's no use," said Maggie, "he's off again."

"We were kept as pets, too, sometimes," the Cicada continued, "and, when we died, beautiful little tombs—mausoleums, I suppose you would call them—were raised over our bodies."

"Oh, come now," said Jack, who couldn't quite believe this, though it was true enough.

"Yes," said the Cicada, "and sometimes, to make the compliment more marked, a poet of distinction used to write an epitaph on the tombstone."

"Used he really?" said Maggie, who was beginning to get quite interested in these wonderful statements made by the Cicada—she had never heard anything of the sort about other insects. "Used he really?"

"Certainly," said the Cicada, "or else she did. Sometimes it was a female poet—Sapho, for instance, or Amynta—I suppose you've heard of them."

"I think I've heard of Sapho," said Maggie.

"Everyone must have done who is not very ignorant," said the Cicada, with a look at Jack, who didn't even think he had. "It was either she or the other—I forget which now, but the style, I think, is Amynta's—who said that I—that is to say one of us—had been torn from her by unrelenting Hades—the god of the underworld, you know, that terrible place, where cicadas—but *that*, I think, must have been a fable—were supposed not to sing any more. Very affecting, was it not?"

"I suppose so," said Maggie, not knowing what else to say.

"Anacreon's lines," continued the Cicada, "I have already referred to—about sipping the dew, you know. I will now quote them :

"‘ Oh, Tettix ’

—one of my honorary titles, as I explained—

‘drunk with sipping dew,
What monarch can compare with you?’

Pretty plain speaking that, was it not?—and elsewhere he says I sing ‘*royally*.’ He could hardly have gone further than that, I think. Homer himself has alluded

to my 'delicate music,' but that was not quite so handsome. However, when I hear the many harsh voices around me, I recognise the compliment. As for Hesiod, with him I am 'the dark-winged Tettix, who sings, all day long, of the coming summer,' and so forth."

"Yes, Mr Cicada," said Maggie.

"Odes of a still more complimentary nature have been addressed to me," the Cicada continued. "Only tell me that you know Greek, and I will consent to repeat them."

"I'm afraid we can't tell you that, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, "because we neither of us do."

"They will not bear translation," said the Cicada—"the beauty is too subtle."

"Oh, it's all very interesting, I suppose," said Jack, who began to think he was doing Greek reading at school—"but——"

"I am delighted you should find it so," said the Cicada. "*Most* interesting, and *most* instructive. Why, even the Greek ploughman loved me, and would compose little songs in my praise."

"Would he really, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"To be sure he would," said the Cicada, "and sing them, too. His superiority, in that respect, over the modern one was most marked."

"It's all very interesting," Jack was beginning again, "but——"

"Another instance of the way in which I was valued is more interesting still," said the Cicada, "if you would *care* to listen."

"Oh, all right," said Jack, feeling that he was obliged to, and Maggie, who was more interested, as well as more polite, said, "Oh, please tell it us, Mr Cicada."

"In those days," said the Cicada, who was quite ready

to, "people were very fond of having musical and poetical contests. The competitors played on the lyre (which was then the fashionable instrument) and sang to it, and those who listened to them had to decide which did it best. That was a difficult question sometimes, various opinions were expressed, and often the dispute would run high; but if one of *us* flew on to anybody's lyre, that, at once, settled it, and whoever it belonged to got the prize. There could be no appeal against *our* judgment."

"Couldn't there, really?" said Maggie.

"Certainly not," said the Cicada. "You see, we were sacred to Apollo, who was the god of music and poetry. When *we* flew on to the lyre that showed his opinion, as well as ours. Our voice, in fact, was equal to his, which means, I suppose, that we were considered to sing quite as well."

"Oh *dear*, Mr Cicada," said Maggie.

"You may well be impressed," said the Cicada. "When I tell you that the lyre was *his* emblem, and that *we* have frequently figured with it on gems, you will be able to draw your own conclusion."

"On gems, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie, not quite understanding.

"Carved upon them, I mean," the Cicada explained, "with the lyre—symbol of musical genius—beside us, and some lines in our praise underneath. The lyre, you see, stood for both of us—for us, I mean, as well as for Apollo—a common attribute. I need say no more."

"I believe he thinks he *was* Apollo," said Maggie, in a low voice, to Jack. "The Katydid was nothing to him."

"I hope I haven't overpowered you," said the Cicada. "You may still ask me questions."

"Oh, thank you," said Maggie, trying to think of one. "And did you often fly on to the lyre, Mr Cicada, to give someone the prize?" she asked presently.

"Not we," answered the Cicada, "such an honour was rarely deserved, and so rarely accorded. I don't mean to say," he continued, "that, for mere human beings, there were not some who distinguished themselves very highly, but it was only in very exceptional cases that they were worthy the notice of Apol—of a cicada, in short."

Here Jack gave a long, low whistle, full of expression.

"Excuse me," said the Cicada, "but I could never have flown down to *that*. Why, it hasn't even a trill in it."

"It wasn't meant for music," said Jack, and then he leant over, and whispered to Maggie: "He's *much* more conceited than the Katydid."

"Yes, I think he is," Maggie answered in the same tone, "but I like him, all the same. I think he's a nice insect, Jack, and what he tells us is most curious."

"You needn't speak with bated breath," said the Cicada, "because it is my wish to hear you. Don't be nervous. I am high but accessible. Well, so what do you think of me now?"

"Oh, I think you're quite wonderful, really, Mr Cicada," said Maggie.

"Such was the universal opinion of antiquity," remarked the Cicada. "The honour in which I was held was extraordinary. Odes—but on that I have touched. However, there is no lack of fresh subject-matter. Shall I go on?"

"Oh yes, please do, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, who liked hearing him talk.

"But I wish you'd go on in another way, Mr Cicada,"

said Jack, who saw his opportunity here, and resolved to explain things thoroughly. "You know, what *I* like is the natural history part about you, and what you've been talking about has nothing to do with *that* at all. It's all about quite different kinds of things, ancient history, or, at least, ancient times, and all that. It's all about people and not really about you, at all—at least, not about your habits, and things that you know about. Why, you weren't alive, then, Mr Cicada—you couldn't have been, you know—so I don't see how you can know about it."

"Not know about it!" said the Cicada, "then I'm sure I don't know what I do know about, because 'it' is *me*, and if that doesn't settle it, then what is to?"

"How do you mean that 'it' is you?" said Jack.

"If it isn't you'd better tell me what I am," said the Cicada. "That might simplify matters."

"Why, a cicada, of course," said Jack.

"Yes, but 'In Story and Mythology,'" the Cicada explained. "That's the heading of the chapter I'm in, you see. Now, in a book, whatever chapter one's in is the present chapter, which is the only present time that *I* know about."

"But if it talks about the past, you know——" said Maggie.

"Why, we've been doing that," said the Cicada, "but we're present, all the same."

"But you said, yourself, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "that it was all in ancient times, and not now, that it happened."

"I cannot explain my sensations," said the Cicada, "or the mystery of my being. I'm written in the past tense, I know, but however I'm written here I am.

Why, I must be if you are, or how could we be talking now? Come!"

This puzzled both Jack and Maggie, and it really seemed as if the Cicada had the best of the argument. "You see," he went on, "if one does exist in a book one has to be what one is there, and if one says it's only what one was, somewhere else, then how *does* one exist in it? It's impossible that one can, I say. In fact, if I wasn't existing now, but had only existed before, there could be no *me*, at present, in which case, what becomes of the present conversation between us? Why, it couldn't be going on, you know. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes, I think I do," said Maggie—she was getting a good deal confused.

"But as it is," continued the Cicada, "the conversation proves *me* because it's *with* me, and as I'm written in the past tense, that proves that I am what I was, because, that's all there is of me *to* be, which, again, proves it's true—for how can one be what one isn't?"

There seemed no disputing what the Cicada said—he was evidently a most powerful reasoner—except that neither Jack nor Maggie could see why there should be no more of him than what they had just been hearing.

"Haven't other things been written about you, Mr Cicada?" Jack asked at last—"the kind of things in natural history books like this, you know?"

"In the next chapter, and under another heading, they have," answered the Cicada. "But until we get there it will not be the present one, and I can only talk in that. I am, of course, subject to certain laws, and all there is of me at present comes under the present heading."

“But can’t we get on into the next chapter?” asked Jack.

“Not till I’m worked out in this,” the Cicada replied. “That, however, if I may trust my own perceptions, which seldom deceive me, will be soon—quite soon. I feel exhausted already.”

“How soon?” asked Jack. “But I suppose the best way’s to go on,” he added.

“Excuse me,” said the Cicada, “but I cannot. I am exhausted. I end now, abruptly, so must disappear till I’m continued. Good-bye.”

CHAPTER XII

A REMARKABLE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

“GOOD-BYE,” said both Jack and Maggie, feeling rather surprised.

“Not at all, it’s how d’ye do, again, now,” said the Cicada. “You weren’t nearly quick enough.”

“Quick enough for what?” asked Jack.

“Why, to say good-bye, just before I ended,” said the Cicada. “*Now*, of course, I’m continued.”

“But you were so quick, Mr Cicada,” said Maggie.

“That’s because you went on directly,” the Cicada explained. “The interval’s as short as you make it, only there must be one, of course.”

“But I didn’t notice any,” said Jack.

“Are you sure of that—both of you?” said the Cicada anxiously. “Didn’t I end for a moment—in which case I must have disappeared?”

“Well, I hardly quite know,” said Maggie. “I think so, and yet——” In fact, on reflection, neither she nor Jack could feel perfectly sure whether the Cicada had disappeared, for an instant, or not.

“To tell you the truth,” said the Cicada, “I’m not *quite* certain myself. I did my best, but one of the most difficult things *to* do is to end, and yet be continued. It baffles even the most skilful.”

“But if you *are* continued, Mr Cicada,” said Jack, “I suppose you don’t really end.”

“Don’t I?” said the Cicada. “Then what do I really do at the end of a chapter? Tell me that.”

“Why, then you’re continued in the next,” said Maggie.

"From the last—exactly," said the Cicada. "But you see there's an interval between the two. It doesn't matter how short, but there is one. Now what I want to know is, where am I in that interval? I've often wondered, but never been able to tell."

"I suppose it is puzzling," said Maggie.

"Puzzling!" said the Cicada, "I should think it was puzzling. And then, again, if I leave off at the end of the chapter—as we all have to, you know—how can I be continued from it?—and if I am continued from it—and here I am, you see—how do I ever leave off? Oh, it's quite a riddle to me. I can see no solution. Well, can you help me?"

"I—I'm afraid not," said Maggie.

"Of course you can't," said the Cicada. "It is one of the greatest mysteries of book-life."

"But surely——" began Maggie, and then stopped short, not quite knowing what she felt sure about.

"There are others, of course," continued the Cicada reflectively. "The difficulty is, perhaps, heightened in the case of a hiatus. And then take misprints. Can one be true in one?—and if one is—as being there, you see—how is one affected by the *errata* at the end of the volume? But such questions are almost beyond us."

They were quite beyond Jack and Maggie, and Jack, in particular, was much more interested in another one. "Then have we got into the natural history chapter now, Mr Cicada?" he asked.

"To be sure we have," the Cicada answered. "'Life-History' is my present heading, so if you'd really like me to tell it you——"

"Oh yes, if you please, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "I would like you to very much."

"From the beginning?" said the Cicada in an agitated tone of voice.

"Oh yes, please, sir," Jack answered, thinking this a funny question.

"I suppose I must then," said the Cicada sadly. "After all, one has to bow to one's heading, which is what I call fate. Otherwise I should have preferred to draw a veil over those earlier and less exalted phases of my existence, which I cannot now remember with any satisfaction."

"Oh no, please, Mr Cicada," said Jack. "I should so like to hear them."

"Possibly," said the Cicada, "but *I* must suffer in their recital."

"Oh, I hope not, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, but the Cicada only shook its head (to do which it had to shake its whole body too) in a melancholy way, and said, "It is a painful thing for an insect such as I have become, to have to recall a period during which I had neither wings nor the gift of song, and instead of the sunshine and the blue sky which I now enjoy—oh, so intensely—had to live in a dark, confined chamber—in fact a hole—into which the light of day never entered."

"Did you really, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"Why, you were there yourself," said the Cicada, breaking into his usual tone again.

"Oh yes, so I was," said Maggie—it had all been so different, since, that both she and Jack had nearly forgotten it—"but we couldn't see, you know, so we didn't really find out anything."

"We don't know what you looked like or how you got down there," said Jack, "so you might tell us about it properly."

"It is unwillingly that I turn once more to the dark

portals of my infancy," said the Cicada. "However——"

"If you'd really rather not, Mr Cicada——" said Maggie.

"I would *much* rather not," said the Cicada. "But I must—it is written in my heading."

"Oh then, if you must——" said Maggie.

"Ssh! let him get on," said Jack, and the Cicada, after looking as if he was waiting not to be interrupted any more—which is a very dignified expression—began his life-history in the following words: "Shall I ever forget my sensations when I fell from the twig on which I was hatched—it might have been this one for anything I know—into the dark gulf of unfathomable futurity!"

"What does that mean, please?" said Jack.

"It's a way of putting things," the Cicada explained, "by which they become more impressive, but what it means is that I fell to the ground."

"But what were you like, then, Mr Cicada?" asked Jack.

"Very different from what I am now," said the Cicada. "No poet could have spoken of me *then* as 'the dark-winged cicada,' because I had no wings. Those beautiful appendages which you have been all this while admiring, and which now, as one of you remarked, quite hide my body, belong only to my present perfect condition. I am sorry to tell you that in those days I was imperfect. However, they are long past."

"Then do you *really* think that you're perfect now, Mr Cicada?" asked Maggie, who thought this was a little too much, even for a cicada.

"Why, don't you know that I'm a perfect insect?" the Cicada answered. "But *you're* not an entomologist."

"They *are* all perfect insects after they've made their last change," Jack admitted. "They're always called that in the books, only——"

"Say when you want me to go on," said the Cicada very politely.

"Oh, do go on, please, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, "and I won't interrupt again, really. Then you didn't fly down from the branch?" she continued.

"Alas, no," the Cicada answered, "it was not a flight, but a fall."

"I hope you didn't hurt yourself, Mr Cicada," said Maggie.

"I was too light to do that," said the Cicada. "I went through the air like a feather."

"But how did you manage it?" Maggie asked. "I mean," she explained, "what made you tumble off?"

"It was not an accident, as you imagine," said the Cicada, "though I don't wonder that you should think so. However, I cannot pretend that it was. How to account for it I'm sure I don't know. Constituted as I am now, it seems inexplicable, but in my then imperfect state I had an impulse—an uncontrollable impulse—to sink, to go downwards, in fact to fall."

"Really, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"Were I inventing," said the Cicada, "I should invent something pleasanter. It is a thing I don't like to think of, but I am recounting my history, and, being now perfect, must, of course, tell the truth."

Jack and Maggie both said, "Of course," and the Cicada continued as follows:

"For a little while I ran up and down, on my twig, and felt comfortable enough, but, all at once, this strange longing which I speak of assailed me. Resistance was useless, at least I felt that it would have

been, so didn't make any, I just ran to the edge of the abyss, as I may well call it, and—*let myself go*."

"You did?" said Maggie—for the Cicada had stopped again, as if he expected some remark to be made.

"Yes, I did," said the Cicada. "Blame me if you will."

"I don't think anyone can blame you, Mr Cicada," Maggie said gently. "It was natural, I suppose."

"It was," said the Cicada—"in my then imperfect state."

"But you haven't said what you were like, Mr Cicada," said Jack.

"I was very small," said the Cicada quickly, "and so young—only just hatched, you know."

"Oh yes, of course, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "but what were you like, besides that? I suppose you were quite different then?"

"Different indeed!" said the Cicada, "wingless and voiceless—imperfect. However, I need not regret it now."

"But do say how you looked, Mr Cicada," said Jack impatiently.

"Well," said the Cicada, "if I must, I must. I was—*can* you believe me?—a little white maggoty-looking thing, with two long hairy antennæ, and some hairs—not at all pretty ones—all down my body. I had tiny little eyes that I could hardly see with, but six quite big legs—bigger, in proportion, than what I have now—and the two front ones ended in great curved things like claws, which had—I cannot but think so now—a strange, uncouth appearance. In fact I had then (please look at me as I say so) an uncouth appearance altogether."

"But what were those great claws of yours for, Mr Cicada?" asked Jack.

The Cicada made quite a long pause before answering this question, and then said, in a tone of deep repugnance, "They were for *burrowing* with."

"Oh, for burrowing with, were they?" said Jack.

"They were," said the Cicada. "Disbelieve me if you will."

"Oh, we wouldn't do that, Mr Cicada," said Maggie.

"I should not be offended," said the Cicada. "On the contrary, I should consider it a compliment. To think of *me*—a cicada—burrowing!"

"Well, and how did you like it, Mr Cicada?" Jack asked.

"That is the queerest—I may say the most revolting—part about it," answered the Cicada. "Disbelieve me again, if you prefer to, but the fact is I *did* like it. All I can say for myself is that I was very imperfectly developed."

"You were quite a baby, you know," said Maggie, as the Cicada seemed to think that some excuse was necessary.

"True," said the Cicada, "I cling to that. Still, when I think how persistent these debased tastes were—the time that they lasted——"

"How long did you burrow for, Mr Cicada?" asked Jack. "I mean, how long were you in the ground?"

"Se-ven-teen years!" the Cicada answered, in a slow, impressive manner.

"Oh, come now," said Jack, who thought that such a long life as this was altogether impossible for an insect. "Oh, come now, I——" He was going to say that he didn't believe it, but Maggie put her hand on his arm, with "Hush, Jack," for the Cicada had turned away, with an offended look, and was now singing with his back to them.

"Please go on, Mr Cicada," she said, but the Cicada, instead of going on, only said, "When one has gone through all one's stages, and arrived, at last, at one's perfect condition, one doesn't tell fibs."

"I didn't mean that exactly, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "but I thought you might be making a mistake."

"Mistake indeed!" said the Cicada. "As if I didn't know my own age!"

"I was only surprised, you know, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "and you know you said we might disbelieve you if we liked, and that you wouldn't be offended."

"I didn't say so in this case," said the Cicada, "and that makes all the difference. The permission was not of a general character. But I suppose you apologise?"

"Oh yes, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "but I only——"

"Then it's all right," said the Cicada, turning round again and singing louder than ever. "It is impossible to damp for long the innate joyousness of my disposition."

"But you know, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "it's a most—a most tremendous time, and I didn't know any insect had such a long life."

"No other one has," said the Cicada, drawing himself up proudly as he spoke. "You may not, perhaps, have realised the fact, but I am the famous Periodical or Seventeen-Year Cicada—the longest-lived insect in the world."

"Are you really, Mr Cicada?" said Jack, who didn't in the least know—any more than Maggie—what a periodical cicada could mean—it sounded more like a newspaper, he thought, than the name of an insect.

"Yes," said the Cicada. "I come up—that is to say, a fresh brood of us does—every seventeen years."

"And are there no cicadas, like you, in between?" said Jack, to whom this seemed very surprising.

"Of course we're not all born at the same time," the Cicada answered, "so you might see *some* Seventeen-Year Cicadas any year. Some broods may come up here, at one time, and some others there, at another; but there must be seventeen years between brood and brood at any one place. What I mean is," he continued—for he evidently wished to make it very clear—"that when I and the rest of my brood (all those cicadas that you see round about you) are sung out, as I call it, none of our descendants will appear here again, in their perfect condition, for the next seventeen years. During all that time the world—that is to say the upper world—will have to go on without us."

"It seems very funny, Mr Cicada," said Jack.

"You see it must be," the Cicada explained. "It may be hard, but there's no remedy."

"I didn't mean that," said Jack. "But seventeen years is a time to have to live in the ground without coming up."

"As to that, it's the right time," said the Cicada.

"But surely it's dreadfully long," said Maggie.

"Not for us," the Cicada answered. "You see, there's a reason for it. We have to develop, and a nature like ours is not to be developed in a day."

"But seventeen years!" said Jack (who had had no idea before that an insect could live half that time), "it is funny!"

"It is very remarkable, certainly," said the Cicada, "but then, so are we."

"And how long do you stay here after you do come up, Mr Cicada?" asked Maggie.

"Three weeks of song is the usual time," said the Cicada, "but I sha'n't be sung out here till I'm out

of print. That mayn't be for years, you know, and until I am, I shall be able to look after you both—that is, if you stay here," he added.

"I don't want to stay as long as that," said Maggie.

"Perhaps you'll have to," said the Cicada. "To get out of a book is a much more difficult thing than to get into one. But never mind," he continued—for Maggie didn't look at all happy at hearing this—"you may be expurgated, though that's an unpleasant process—and, anyhow, I'll look after you."

"Oh, thank you, Mr Cicada," said Maggie uneasily. "It's very kind of you, but——"

"Not at all," said the Cicada. "I'm the eldest of the three, so I ought to."

"Older than us!" cried Jack, for the idea seemed so funny that, even after what the Cicada had told him, he could hardly believe it.

"To be sure I am," the Cicada answered. "Why, you're both mere children, whilst I am in my eighteenth year."

"It does seem curious," said Maggie. "I never should have thought——"

"I daresay not," said the Cicada, "because you're only a child. When you get to my age, you will see matters in another light."

"I only meant——" began Maggie.

"Tut, child, you want experience," said the Cicada. "Had you spent seventeen years underground, and in total darkness, as I have, you would have more enlightened ideas."

"I don't see why I should, if it comes to that," said Maggie, "and I think it's very irritating to be spoken to as if one didn't know anything, just because——"

"Well, well," said the Cicada, "it's natural, at your age, to think so. I can make allowances. I shouldn't wonder if you were passing through one of my own phases. Come, come, you are mere children, both of you, so I take you under my tutelage."

"What's that, please, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"Oh, you'll know when you're older, child," said the Cicada. "Another point is that I, being the elder, should, of course, take precedence. You don't dispute that, I suppose?"

"If you mean coming first, and that sort of thing——" said Maggie.

"Exactly," said the Cicada. "You will excuse me if, being in my eighteenth year, I sometimes use words with which *you* are not familiar."

"I'm sure *I* don't dispute it, then," said Maggie, "because I think it's all nonsense."

"Yes, and so do I," said Jack.

"Between us, perhaps," the Cicada admitted, "the point is not likely to arise. With those of my own race, however, it is different, and I beg you will never confound *me* with the Thirteen-Year Cicada, for instance—with that insect there," he continued, turning, a little, and pointing with one of his feet, "who, I am quite convinced, is one."

Jack and Maggie both looked to where the Cicada pointed, and saw another cicada on a twig a few inches off, that looked exactly the same as the one they were speaking to.

"Yes, that's the insect I mean," said the Cicada. "*His* period of probation is prolonged for only thirteen years, which cannot, of course, give him the same status that is acquired by us who undergo the more extended term. You see that, I hope?"



“ I beg you will never confound *me* with the Thirteen-Year Cicada, for instance—with that insect there”

"I see that you burrow for seventeen years, and that he only burrows for thirteen," said Jack.

"Precisely," said the Cicada. "At the end of that curtailed period he emerges, and, though four years our junior, presumes to sit and sing upon the same twigs as we do. What do you think of *that*, for assurance?"

"I suppose he doesn't see why he shouldn't," said Jack, who didn't at all see why himself.

"He is obtuse in his perceptions, I admit," said the Cicada, "but that doesn't excuse him, since it is a matter of simple arithmetic. Yes, he sits on our twigs, and it's no use trying to avoid him, as one can't be always flying from one to another. However, I hope that you will never mix us up."

"But how are we to tell which is which, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie, "because, you know"—she had been looking at both of them very closely—"you *are* rather alike."

"A certain family resemblance," said the Cicada, "there must, of course, be, but that only emphasises the difference. There is an indescribable something which sufficiently differentiates us."

Maggie looked at the other cicada, again, still more intently (and so did Jack too), and then at the Seventeen-Year one; but, look as they might, they couldn't see that there was any difference at all between them. They were the same size and the same colour, and sat and sang just in the same way. In fact, they looked exactly the same.

"Please, Mr Cicada," said Maggie at last, "what *is* the something that one can know by?"

"Didn't I say it was indescribable?" said the Cicada. "There are some things which cannot be put into words, but what does that matter when they are at

once felt by any capable judge? Suffice it to say that *we feel* the difference, and there are no intermarriages between us. That proves it, of course."

"Proves what?" asked Jack.

"Why, that we're different species, to be sure," the Cicada answered. "Kindly remember that."

"I'll try to," said Jack, "only it seems rather funny. Let me see: there's one kind of cicada that stays seventeen years in the ground, and comes up every seventeen years, and another that only stays thirteen, and comes up every thirteen years, and they both look exactly the same, and sing the same, but they're really two different species."

"Certainly," said the Cicada, "and there are no intermarriages between us. If there were, I think my voice would break."

"You mean your heart, Mr Cicada, don't you?" said Maggie.

"My voice, child, my voice," the Cicada answered. "It's all over with a cicada when *that* happens—only one must have a voice, of course. Female cicadas have none, you know, and a great many very sarcastic things have been said about that."

"But if you don't like burrowing, Mr Cicada, and don't think it's a very grand sort of thing to do, why is it so superior to have burrowed for three years longer?" Jack asked.

"That is easily answered," said the Cicada. "Burrowing is not a high thing, in itself, certainly. Still, if one must do it—if one has to pass through the phase—it should at least be done thoroughly, and seventeen years is the right time."

"Yes, it is, to you," said Maggie, "but perhaps *he* thinks that thirteen years is the right time."

"He does hold that view," answered the Cicada, "but as I am four years his senior I hope I may be allowed to know better. He is only thirteen, you see, and at *that age*" (here he looked at Maggie a little curiously, as if he was wondering how old she was) "one's opinions are not sufficiently matured. No, no," he continued, "one must be underground for one's full seventeen years for the judgment properly to expand itself."

"But what do you do all the time you're in the ground, Mr Cicada?" asked Jack, who only cared about the natural history—"I mean besides burrowing."

"Why, drink, to be sure," the Cicada answered.

"Drink!" cried Jack and Maggie, both together—for it seemed to them such a funny idea.

"Why, yes," said the Cicada, in rather an apologetic tone. "You see the influences are depressing, and there's no one to talk to, and one can't sing then, as I told you—though it may sound incredible—and then, it's so dark, you know, so I hope there's some excuse."

"I suppose it's a long time to be all by oneself," said Maggie, in a sympathetic tone.

"And then, being in a cellar," the Cicada continued, "and with the materials at hand, it's natural one should turn to it."

"In a cellar!" said Maggie.

"Yes, a cellar," said the Cicada. "Why, what else should it be? It's underground, as it ought to be, and dark and damp, quite without furniture, and there's an earthy smell about it. If that's not a cellar, then I don't know what is one."

"Don't you mean it's your cell, Mr Cicada?" said Jack.

"*You* may pronounce it in that way," said the Cicada, "but *I* call it my cellar. And besides, there's the tap-root handy, which is quite appropriate."

"The tap-root?" said Jack.

"Haven't you heard of that?" said the Cicada. "Every tree has its tap-root, you know, which is the most important part of it, as any gardener will tell you. Now it is just the roots of trees which come into our cellars, so as to provide us cicadas with nourishment. We suck up their juices, and if we didn't we should die before we were able to sing."

"But it needn't always be the tap-root that comes in, need it?" asked Jack. "A tree has a lot of roots, you know."

"Whichever one it is, we tap it," the Cicada answered, "and that, in my opinion, makes it the tap-root."

"Oh, I see," said Jack, "and——"

"And a great comfort it is," said the Cicada. "When one feels dull, you know, what with the long night and the solitude—it's always night, practically, when one lives in a dark cellar—when the heart grows weary, if I may so express it—the best—in fact, the only thing to do is to go to the tap-root—it isn't far off—and take a pull at it."

"That sounds rather funny, Mr Cicada," said Jack (as for Maggie, she felt quite shocked to hear a cicada talk so).

"It *tastes* all right," said the Cicada, "which is the test I apply. As for its sounding funny, why it's what I do now, even, sometimes, though, in this, my perfect state, I have almost given up the habit."

"I should like to see you, Mr Cicada," said Jack.

"Just to oblige you, you shall," said the Cicada, "though I'm not feeling thirsty—in fact, I hardly ever do now. The need of song is my only present need. However, to oblige *you*——"

As he said this, the Cicada raised himself a little on

all his six legs together, so that, instead of being flat against the twig, as he had been before, he was standing a little above it, and then both Jack and Maggie saw that, under his head, where the jaws of a wasp or a grasshopper, or any ordinary insect would have been, he had a funny, long thing that looked more like a pin or a needle than anything to do with a mouth. It had evidently been bent underneath him, but, as he stood up, the Cicada brought it forward, a little, so that one saw it all the more plainly. "Now observe," he said, in quite a grand way, as if he were lecturing, "when about to drink, I raise myself somewhat, and bring my lips into contact with the bark of the twig on which I rest. You follow that, I hope."

"But where are your lips, Mr Cicada?" said Jack. "You don't seem to me to have any."

"Don't seem to have any!" said the Cicada. "It would be more sensible, I think, if I were to say that to you, because your mouth—or what I suppose to be your mouth—I may be in error—is quite flat. However, I try to remember that there are other beings, besides cicadas, in the universe, and that they are all fashioned on the most peculiar principles. Where are my lips, indeed! Why here they are, pressed against the bark of the twig I am resting on, as I told you in the most correct language."

"Yes, I see, Mr Cicada," said Jack, for it occurred to him that on such a subject *he* ought to know best; "only they look like a beak, you know."

"Call them what you will," said the Cicada. "They are really lips, all the same. Well then, to continue:—The surface of the bark being excoriated by the extrusion of the interior *setæ*, a vacuum is produced, through which the plant's juices ascend by suction, in the ordinary manner. You understand?"

"No, I don't, Mr Cicada," said Jack. "It's just as if one was at a lecture, you know, and, of course, *at* a lecture it would be all right. But I wish you wouldn't talk like that here."

"Please don't, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, "because we *want* to understand now, you know."

"Excuse me," said the Cicada, "I keep forgetting the disparity of our ages. What I mean is, that I just cut the bark, and then suck up the sap through my beak, as you call it—that is to say, through my lips. You understand that, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "I know exactly what you mean now, and of course you cut the bark with the pointed end of your beak. You stick it into it, I suppose."

"I do nothing of the kind," said the Cicada. "My lips are not my jaws, and it is my jaws that I use in that way. *They* are inside my lips, as I will show you if you look." And, as he said this, the Cicada lifted up his head again—only this time much higher—and from the very tip of that funny, pointed beak of his—which was really his lips—two little things shot out, that looked like threads—only they were stiff, and sharp at the ends—and shot back again directly. "There," said the Cicada, "those are my jaws, though perhaps you mightn't think it, and it is with those that I cut the bark—as if I were sticking two little pins into it—and not with my lips, as people suppose. My lips only just touch the twig, but my two jaws, or mandibles, which are made long on purpose, come down inside them, and give it a dig. Of course when the bark is wounded the sap exudes—by which I mean that it comes out—and then I suck it up through my lips."

"I see, Mr Cicada," said Jack. "Your lips make a

hollow pipe for it to go up. It's just as if I were to put a straw into my mouth, and suck up water, or something, in that way."

"Precisely," answered the Cicada. "That would be an extremely clumsy imitation."

"But aren't your mandibles rather funny, Mr Cicada?" said Jack—he knew the word "mandibles," and was rather proud of it. "A grasshopper's, you know, or a beetle's, or wasp's, are short, and just bite against each other, like—I mean, in the proper way, you know."

"The usual way I *hope* you mean," said the Cicada, almost severely—it would have been quite severe in another kind of insect—"there is nothing improper in the way I obtain my nourishment."

"Oh no, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "I didn't mean that, of course. I meant unusual."

"Unusual, certainly," said the Cicada, "because there can be nothing usual about a cicada. We have been profoundly modified—by which I mean improved—in various directions, so that it is of no use to confound our structure with that of the inferior insects. *They* are no standard for *us*. That," he continued, "is why our mandibles have been turned into delicate, threadlike probes, instead of mere clumsy, flat things, to bite with. A cicada never does bite—it would be too uncivilised."

"Then you really don't eat, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"I would not do anything so coarse," said the Cicada, "I told you so before. Drinking is a much more refined operation, and I am now going to have another pull."

As the Cicada said this he again pressed his beak, or lips, against the bark, and remained with it like that for a second or two. "There!" he said, as he moved it backwards again under him, and sank down into his usual attitude on the twig. "It was very nice, I can

assure you, and I ought to know, for I have two tongues to taste it with.”

“Two tongues!” cried Jack and Maggie, both together, for it seemed to them wonderful.

“Yes, two,” the Cicada answered. “One that comes down from the roof of the mouth, and the other from the lower lip, only I can’t show you either of them. However, I could tell you their scientific names if you wished to hear them, as well as some other facts of an instructive nature.”

“Oh no, thank you, Mr Cicada,” said Jack, “because—because it might be troubling you. But do all insects have two tongues?” he went on very quickly, before the Cicada had time to say it wouldn’t be.

“I daresay they haven’t” said the Cicada, “but, at any rate, all cicadas have. There is not one of us, I think I may say, who would consent to put up with only one. No doubt we are exceptional, but I have nothing to do with the inferior insects.”

“And have you a beak—I mean a mouth—like that, all the time you are in the ground, Mr Cicada?” asked Jack.

“Most certainly,” the Cicada answered. “If I hadn’t, I should die, I suppose, before I had known song and sunshine—terrible!—since in my then imperfect state nourishment is essential to me. Now, as I have said, I hardly want it. When I took that pull, a moment ago, I was merely giving a demonstration; but then it is different, and living alone all those years, in a cellar, and with so many other excuses, I confess that I am always drinking.”

“But are you *quite* alone the whole time?” asked Maggie in quite a melancholy voice—for it seemed to her to be dreadful.

"Practically we are," the Cicada answered, "for though ever so many of us go into the ground together, each one has his own separate cellar, with its tap-root, to himself. We can't see through the walls, of course—even if it were light, and not dark, we couldn't—and so we are alone, even though there are crowds of us—oh, thousands and thousands—which, you know, is the worst form of solitude."

"Thousands and thousands!" said Maggie, in great surprise.

"Yes, and more than that," said the Cicada, "hundreds of thousands—oh, I can't tell you how many—all tapping the roots of the same tree. Pray don't think I exaggerate—you may judge for yourself. You see how these twigs are covered, and every lady cicada amongst us will lay ever so many eggs in the bark, when the proper period arrives."

"But, Mr Cicada," said Jack, "don't you do a lot of harm to the tree by sucking at its roots, like that? I should think you would kill it."

"As for that," said the Cicada, "as there have always been trees, and cicadas have always lived and sung in them, I don't think there can be much fear of our supply running short through any improvidence on our part. Why, just think of the great forests that there used to be, and it is men, and not cicadas, who have wasted them—man, you see, is a common enemy."

This was a new idea to Jack, who was accustomed to make animals responsible for most of the harm that men do; but here was another way of looking at it.

"When you think what a very large thing a tree is," the Cicada continued, "and how its roots spread out all under the ground—a very great deal farther than its branches do in the air—and then when you consider

how small, in comparison, a cicada, in its infancy, is, and that it is only just the very small rootlets that come into our cellars, and which we are able to tap, why, I think you must agree with me that we are not very likely to starve. We should have to drink very deeply indeed for there to be any lack of the sustaining element. So don't be uneasy. We sha'n't drink the trees dry. No fear."

"Yes, that's all very well, Mr Cicada," said Jack, who had read somewhere that cicadas were injurious, and wasn't going to give up. "I daresay you don't kill forests or very large trees, but supposing——"

"Well, supposing what?" said the Cicada.

"Supposing there was rather a small tree," Jack went on, "and that there were a very great many young cicadas all sucking at its roots, and if it wasn't very strong to begin with, then, perhaps, it might die."

"Oh, if it was dying before, of course it might," said the Cicada. "There are unworthy trees, of course, but such cases are very exceptional. Trees and cicadas are very good friends, as a rule. We appreciate their efforts to afford us nutriment, whilst they are naturally grateful to us for sitting and singing in them."

"But if some of them do die?" said Jack.

"Why, then we must try and find better ones," said the Cicada, "or, if we couldn't, then the roots of grasses might do. We should manage somehow, I daresay."

"But that might be as bad for the grasses," said Jack.

"Oh, I think we should find something," said the Cicada cheerily. "Accidents, of course, must happen sometimes, but, on the whole, I hope there is no reason to anticipate any serious failure in our food supply."

Jack saw now that the Cicada had mistaken his

meaning—he had suspected it for some time—and he was going to explain to him that it was the trees he was afraid about, and not the cicadas, when Maggie whispered that perhaps he had better not. “It might offend him,” she explained, “and anyhow he would never understand that we think trees more important than he is. Besides,” she added, “I don’t think he can hurt them much”—which was a very just reflection.

“But don’t you do anything except drink, Mr Cicada”—this was Jack’s next question—“all those seventeen years you stay in the ground?”

“Why, I grow, to be sure,” said the Cicada, “and that is even more important, because I drink *to* grow, you see. And then I change my skins, which is *as* important, if not more so, than either, because, you see, if I didn’t there would be no room for me inside them, and as I should have to go on growing, all the same, the result would be fatal. Then, as I get larger, I have to enlarge my cellar, which I do by scraping out its sides with my claws. If I didn’t I should be walled up, you know, which would be as bad as the other, so that is very important too. In fact, there is nothing that I do that is not of the very highest importance.”

“How often do you change your skin, Mr Cicada?” asked Jack—he knew that caterpillars changed theirs, so this didn’t surprise him.

“Six times,” the Cicada answered, “and after each change, or moult, I am a different being, and one step nearer to that ultimate state of perfection which you now behold in me. That, as you may imagine, is a most invigorating sensation.”

“And do you look different, Mr Cicada, after each time you change?” Jack inquired.

“Judging by my sensations,” said the Cicada, “I

have every reason to believe that I do, though as, owing to the extreme darkness, I have never seen even a part of my then self, I am not able to inform you so clearly, on that point, as I could wish to. However, I, of course, get larger, and my abdomen (by which I mean all my body below my legs), which was, at first, small and straight, develops grandly, and acquires a more and more elegant curve. My claws, too, become more and more remarkable, and after my third moult, which takes place when I am between six and seven years of age, little pads—my future wing-cases—begin to grow out of my shoulders, and I feel dimly the exalted nature of my future destinies.”

“You mean that you’ll be coming up out of the ground, soon, and sitting here singing in the sun?” said Jack.

“What I mean is,” said the Cicada—he did not seem quite satisfied with Jack’s explanation—“that, from that period, I begin to have some faint conception of what it is to be born a cicada.”

“And how does it go on, Mr Cicada?” asked Maggie.

“Why, it keeps growing with me,” the Cicada answered (though that was not quite what Maggie had meant), “till at last, after another ten years or so, I can resist the upward tendency no longer, and my ascent begins.”

“You mean that you begin to crawl out?” said Jack.

“I mean what I said,” said the Cicada decisively; “my ascent is a much better way of describing it. I have, by then, undergone three more changes, and am in my nymph or pupal state—not my quite perfect one, you understand, but that next door to it.”

“Then you’re not a grub any longer, I suppose, Mr Cicada?” said Jack.

The Cicada looked at Jack, for a second or two, with a not very pleased expression, and then said, by way of answer, "I have, by that time, passed out of my larval condition. The long years of waiting and striving are almost over, and my apotheosis draws near. You will excuse my using so long a word, because I feel it to be the right one."

"It's rather a grand kind of word, isn't it?" said Jack.

"Ascent, if you prefer it," said the Cicada. "I ascend, then, from my earthy envelope" (he did not call it his cellar any more now) "and soon step out upon the very top of the ground. That, however, is not high enough for me, and I begin to bend my course towards a tree."

"Don't you fly up into one, Mr Cicada?" said Jack.

"How can I," said the Cicada, "being still imperfect? Wings have not yet been born to me. Sometimes, indeed, on emerging, I make a hollow mud tower, like a sugar-loaf, inside which I remain for a short time longer."

"What do you do that for, Mr Cicada?" asked Maggie.

"I can't quite explain it," said the Cicada. "Perhaps it is a last clinging to my earthy envelope, a want of perfect confidence, a pausing on the brink, as it were—on the threshold of a new world. I am not quite ready, or I fear the change that I desire. Whatever the explanation may be, it is what I sometimes do. However, I do not stay long in my tower, but soon mount, again by the roof, on which I sit, for a moment or two, before pressing forward to a tree. Here my ascent is continued, until, resting, at length, when I have gained a moderate height upon the trunk, I there undergo my final transformation. My feelings, as I

begin to leave my last imperfect dwelling-place, as I may call it, and come out a perfect insect, you will excuse my not attempting to describe. They are of too solemn a nature.”

“But what——?” began Jack, who had another sort of question to ask.

“Pray do not press me,” said the Cicada hastily. “They are beyond expressing, but I instantly burst into song.”

“Oh, Mr Cicada,” cried Jack suddenly, “do tell me about the way you sing.”

“Why, don’t you hear me?” said the Cicada. “That is the best way of telling you.”

“No, I don’t mean that, Mr Cicada,” said Jack; “I mean how you do it.”

“Oh, the mode of production?” said the Cicada. “Ah, *that* is hidden even from me.”

“Because it’s not like a grasshopper’s or a katydid’s song, you know,” said Jack.

“I *do* know,” said the Cicada. “It is *not*.”

“I mean, you don’t do it with your wings or hind legs,” Jack explained.

“By no means,” acquiesced the Cicada. “I should despise a mere outward form of expression.”

“But how do you, then, please, Mr Cicada?” said Jack.

“It is in vain that you ask me,” the Cicada answered. “All I can tell you is that it issues from the most inward and intimate part of myself.”

“But couldn’t you show it us, Mr Cicada?” asked Jack, “as you did your beak—I mean your mouth, you know?”

“Impossible,” said the Cicada emphatically. “You cannot expect me to dissect myself,” he added, with strong feeling.

Jack saw then (or Maggie did for him) that it would not be in good taste to press the point further. "I suppose it's somewhere right inside him," he said to himself, "so that he really doesn't know what it is—only he ought to, I think, in a book."

"And what were you like when you came out, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie, to change the subject.

"Why, perfect, of course, as I am now," the Cicada answered. "It was my last stage, and I waited till then. You, I daresay, will come out earlier—that is if you have a last stage."

Maggie was not quite sure if "coming out" (which she had heard of) was a last stage—she knew it wasn't a perfect one—but that was not what she had meant. She was going to explain when Jack, who was very interested in the natural history part, did it for her. "But you weren't perfect when you first came out of the ground, Mr Cicada," he said. "That's what we mean, don't we, Maggie?"—for it was the question he had been going to ask himself. "Tell us what you were like then," he went on, "when you were still a chrysalis—at least I suppose so—only you were able to walk."

"Able to walk!" said the Cicada. "I was able to climb, which is something better. Have I not been talking of my ascent? However, if you would really like to know what I looked like, you have only to fly down with me, to the trunk of this tree, where I left my pupal envelope hanging, and you will see. But whilst dwelling on what I once was, do not forget what I am."

"But we can't fly, Mr Cicada," said Maggie—and, at the very thought of trying to, she held tighter to the twig she was on.

"Can't fly!" said the Cicada, "and dumb too—without the gift of song. Poor, imperfect creatures. However, if you both get on to my back I can fly down with you."

"Oh, I think we're too heavy," said Maggie, "and—and it might be dangerous, and—oh, do take care, Jack!"—for whilst he was speaking the Cicada had crawled nearer, and, before she had any idea of it, there was Jack, on his back, astride, with his legs under the wings on each side, and all so quickly that she hardly knew how he had got there—she didn't at all remember seeing him get up.

"Take care!" she cried again. "You'd better—I mean, I think we'd both better—only it *is* very comfortable, and it feels quite safe." For, somehow, whilst she was thinking of Jack there she was upon the Cicada's back too, not astride, like him, but sitting quite easily, with her legs on one side, in quite the proper position, and with one hand on Jack's shoulder. It seemed to her as if they had both got a little smaller, so as to be just the right size, and certainly she felt lighter, and would no more have thought of falling off now than if she had been a feather.

"Are you ready?" said the Cicada. His wings were already spread, and, as he asked the question, they gave a whirr, and out he flew amongst the branches and green leaves. He didn't go down directly, but waited till he had flown some way from the tree—it was a lovely ride—and then turned round and shot back to it, getting lower and lower, till, at last, when not far from the ground, he shot suddenly up, again, and flew on to the trunk. "There!" he said, as soon as he had got there, "you needn't get off, as there are no twigs or branches for you to sit on, but you can see me, if

I may so express myself, *from* me—what I was from what I am—only I would rather you reflected upon what I am.”

“But we’ve come to see what you were, you know, Mr Cicada,” said Maggie.

“Well then, look,” said the Cicada, “but try to appreciate the contrast.”

“Oh, how funny, Mr Cicada!” cried Jack, as he looked up—and so did Maggie—and saw something that was like the Cicada and yet a good deal different, too, clinging to, or rather fixed upon, the trunk of the tree, just above them. “Is that really what you were?”

“It is,” said the Cicada, “or at least it is what I wore—my worn-out clothes, so to speak—garment, I should say, because that sounds so very much better. Still, in a sense, it was myself—but imperfect.”

“Do go a little nearer, Mr Cicada,” said Jack, and the Cicada did.

“Well, well,” he said, “there I am. You may look, but remember I was then imperfect, and try to think of me at my best.”

Jack hardly heard this, and, even if he had heard it, he couldn’t have done what the Cicada asked him: it was at his second best that he was looking, and, for the present, that was all that he could think of him at. “It’s just what you were telling us, Mr Cicada,” he said. “You had no wings then, and there are those great claws that you used to burrow with, and—only you weren’t hollow then,” he continued—for the old Cicada was only an empty shell now—“that opening along your back was where you came out, wasn’t it?”

“It was,” the Cicada answered. “I split there. Shall I ever forget my sensations?”

“I suppose it was rather strange, at first, sir,” said Maggie, “even after you had come out.”

“In a sense it was,” the Cicada answered, “but in another and a deeper sense it was not. But perhaps you don’t understand me?”

“Not quite,” said Maggie, who was a truthful girl.

“How can you at your age?” said the Cicada. “What I mean is that there is an inner essence as well as an outer encrustment, an interior as well as a shell. When I was in my earthy encrustment, or envelope, as I have termed it——”

“Your cellar, you used to call it, Mr Cicada,” said Jack.

“There is a suitable frame of mind for each metaphor,” said the Cicada, “and wealth of expression has never, I believe, been regarded as a failing.”

“Oh no, Mr Cicada,” said Maggie soothingly; “please go on.”

“I recommence,” said the Cicada. “When I was in my earthy encrustment, or envelope, I was in a tomb, as it were, a sarcophagus—more wealth of expression for you—but besides that tomb I have had several others, which I may, with even stricter propriety, term living ones, of which that”—with a jerk of his body towards his cast-off skin—“was the last. The fact is, I, the outer I, which was not really I, has, at every period, been a tomb for the me, the inner me that really was me, all the time. Do you follow that?”

“Yes, I think I do,” said Maggie. “The outer you wasn’t really you, or not so much you as the inner one. But then, you know, the inner one *was* the outer one when it came out.”

“But then there was another inner one inside it,”

said the Cicada eagerly. "There were two I's always, if not more, but the inner I was the higher one, and felt what the other I couldn't. Thus the outer I was voiceless, but the inner I felt song was there; the outer I had no wings, but the inner I, which was really I myself, felt that he—that is, I—had them really, because flight was inherent, and so—— But perhaps it's getting too difficult."

"I think I understand part of what you mean, Mr Cicada," said Maggie (she was not so conceited as to suppose that she understood all). "But it's the outer you that has wings and a voice, now, you know—or at any rate, wings—because, of course, there must be something inside you still."

The Cicada looked a good deal puzzled at this, and said, in a confused sort of way (as if he felt giddy, Maggie thought), "There are no more stages now, it's my final one, you know, so that there can be nothing to—still, as you say, there *is* something, because—that, however, is explained by——" He paused for a little, with quite a bewildered expression, and then concluded, "But the last thing, perhaps, that a cicada ever *will* understand, is himself."

"Do you think so, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie, not knowing what else to say.

"I do," the Cicada answered. "*He* is the crowning mystery! What I mean," he continued, "is that I always was a cicada, essentially, even though I may not always have looked like one, or even been one in the highest sense. The germ had not ripened, which made me imperfect, but I knew, if imperfectly, that I should be perfect some day, because I was, even then—potentially."

"Yes, of course, Mr Cicada," said Maggie, who



The next instant they and the Cicada were tumbling head over heels through the air

thought it was best to humour him, "and now that you are, you don't want to change any more, do you?"

"*I!*" trilled the Cicada, on a very high note. "Would *you* want to change, if *you* were perfect? No, no, beyond what I have now attained to one cannot soar."

"And I suppose you're quite happy, Mr Cicada?" said Maggie.

"Happy!" said the Cicada, in the same way, "I should think I was, indeed, sitting and singing, as I do, all day in the sun. I couldn't be happier, because, you see, it is *perfect* happiness. Oh yes, I am quite happy—now."

"But won't you always be, Mr Cicada?" said Jack.

"Oh, unless something dreadful were to happen," said the Cicada, with just a little quaver, for a moment. "It's a terrible thing that being continued, you know. But what do I care!"—he said this quite defiantly—"I'm happy now, and happy I intend to be—yes, happy! happy! happy!—right to the end of the chapter."

Here the Cicada's voice rose into a high note of triumph, but, all at once, it changed into a harsh, discordant scream, and then left off altogether. At the same moment there was a rushing sound overhead, with a deep, vibrating, ominous hum, which to Jack and Maggie, being so small as they were, sounded almost as loud as a threshing machine. As they looked up, in alarm, a bright golden flash seemed to hit them, and the next instant they and the Cicada were tumbling and fluttering and coming down together, head over heels, through the air. It was quite evident that something dreadful had happened.

CHAPTER XIII

JACK AND MAGGIE ARE FOUND TO BE NOT QUITE IN TUNE

WHAT had happened? Neither Jack nor Maggie were a bit hurt, but they were terribly frightened, as well they might be, for, almost as they touched the ground, another insect, quite different from the Cicada (who was not to be seen now), was buzzing, with that dreadful noise again, just above their heads, and both of them saw directly—even Maggie, who had not got such an eye for an insect as Jack had—that it was a horrible, ferocious-looking wasp, almost as large as themselves. This made it much larger than an ordinary wasp, and it was different in other ways too. The ground colour of its body was a deep, steely-black, or dark brown, but it had broad, golden bands round its abdomen, which flashed in the sun, and a deep red spot just above them, in the centre of the thorax. The legs were reddish, and, altogether, it had a very sting-y and venomous appearance. It was handsome, certainly, and as for effectiveness, Jack and Maggie had never been so much impressed by a wasp before, but it was not a pleasant impression. The wasp's wings were of a deep chestnut hue, and quivered rapidly, as it hung in the air, making a violent wind, whilst its long, black, cruel-looking sting was easy to see, as it protruded, at intervals, from the pointed tip of the abdomen. But even this was not so dreadful to look at as its fierce, yellow eyes, which were fixed upon Jack and Maggie with a *baleful* expression, and its great yellow mandibles, like shining metal plates,

which gnashed together with a horrible, clashing noise—it was evidently terribly angry.

"Where is he?" the Wasp said in a deep, fierce, penetrating voice that seemed to be part of its humming. "Where is he? I stung him and he fell down.

If you don't tell me where he is, I'll sting you too—both of you—and I needn't do it twice either. My sting would transfix the two of you without the smallest difficulty. Pooh! You're only soft-bodied insects."

Jack and Maggie clung together, and were almost too frightened to speak (much less to say they weren't insects), but Jack put himself in front of Maggie, who hid her face on his shoulder.

"If you don't tell me where he is, I'll sting you too," said the Wasp

"It's no use your doing that," said the Wasp, "because, as I can put my sting through both of you, it doesn't matter which it goes through first. Or I could fly round you quicker than you could turn, and sting first one and then the other. I *could* make you serviceable in the economy of my future household, and you look so nourishing that I've half a mind to."



"Oh, Jack, don't let him," said Maggie, still hiding her face.

"Don't *let* me!" shrieked the Wasp. "Why, do you suppose either of you could prevent me? You're both in my power, I tell you, and I could kill you easily, if I thought it consistent with my dignity. However, I'm not sure that it is, so, until I am sure about it, I won't."

"Thank you, sir," said Jack, very humbly.

"This is too provoking," said the Wasp, with great irritation. "'Sir,' indeed!—and 'him.' Do they take me for a drone, then? After my frank allusion, too! I could not have declared myself *more* plainly. So you think I'm a drone, do you—a mere male?"

"It's because you're so big, and—and so strong-looking," said Jack, "that I thought——"

"Dare to say that I don't look like a lady," said the Wasp, "and I'll sting you, and keep on stinging you. The pain will be violent, but you'll die slowly, so if you *want* me to prove my sex—— Who am I? Come now—that's the first thing."

"A wasp, I think—madam," Jack answered.

"Oh, I am, am I?" said the Wasp snappishly. "And why not a hornet, pray?"

"I—I didn't mean——" Jack stammered.

"If you *know* any hornet bigger than I am——" said the Wasp.

"No, I don't really, Mrs Hornet," said Jack.

"I should just like to hear one say she was—that's all," the Wasp continued. "However, as they *will* call me a wasp hereabouts, I suppose I must put up with that, though it's very complacent of me. But you might at least give me my proper title, and it'll be better for yourself if you do."

"Please do, Jack," said Maggie in a whisper, "and then, perhaps, she'll be friendly."

"I will, when I know it, Mrs Hor—Wasp—Hornet," said Jack, "if you'd please be so kind as to tell it me."

"I'm the Great Golden Digger Wasp," said the Wasp majestically, "and now, please, where's my cicada?"

"Please, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack, "he fell down, I think, and——"

"I know *that*," said the Wasp.

"And—and I think he must be amongst the grass, or somewhere, if he hasn't flown away."

"Hasn't *what*?" said the Wasp.

"Flown away," Jack repeated—for he had really very little idea as to what had happened.

The Wasp made a curious humming noise with her wings, for some time, almost as if she were laughing, and then settled on the ground, in front of Jack and Maggie, and began to clean her head and antennæ with her two forelegs. "Excuse me," she said, after she had done this for a minute or two, "but you see, I am a lady and have my toilette to attend to. I believe in refining influences, they have a softening effect on the character. Flown away, did you say? Oh no, you needn't be afraid of *that*, I assure you. *That* is what no cicada does, after I have honoured him with one of *my* visits. Oh *dear*, no, if you have any fears on that head I can reassure you."

Jack felt quite sure, and so did Maggie, that the cruel Wasp knew, as well as possible, that they would both of them have liked the poor Cicada to have flown away, and would be very sorry if anything had happened to him. Even if they hadn't been sure of this before, from her general manner, they would have

been when she began to make that curious buzzing with her wings again—not quite so loud this time—which sounded just like a subdued laugh or chuckle. There could be no doubt after that, and Maggie whispered to Jack—though she was very much afraid of the Wasp overhearing her—“Oh, Jack, I’m afraid she’s stung him to death.”

“However, business is business,” the Wasp continued, after a few final touches, “and the question is where he fell. I should have known quite well if my attention had not been distracted by you, but how could I help looking at two such oddities? And whatever were *you* doing on his back, I should like to know—my own property. If it hadn’t been for that, I should have had him in my nursery-larder by this time, and perhaps have laid my egg into the bargain—but no wonder I was startled. However, I stung him quite nicely.”

“Did you?” said Jack, in a very melancholy voice. As for Maggie, she couldn’t help crying a little—her nerves had already been a good deal upset.

“Yes; so cheer up,” said the Wasp. “You’ll see him again, I haven’t the smallest doubt, which you never would have done, probably, if he had flown away. Come, come, cheer up!” (this last was to Maggie). “I’ll find him for you myself.”

“But he’ll be dead,” sobbed Maggie.

“Not he,” said the Wasp—“only paralysed, I assure you. I can guarantee that, so don’t cry.”

“But he won’t be—won’t be—well,” Maggie went on, for she knew that to be paralysed was something dreadful.

“He’ll be *fresh*, if not lively,” the Wasp answered. “I make a great point of *that*.”

"Fresh?" said Jack.

"Certainly," said the Wasp. "Nothing but what's fresh, and will keep so, comes into *my* nursery-larder. I am much too careful a mother to let it be otherwise. So now to find him!"

She gave a start forward as she spoke, but, seeing that Jack and Maggie stood still, stopped and said: "You may follow me if you like. That's a permission, but a permission from a Great Golden Digger Wasp is like a command, and if people don't obey *my* commands, why, I sting them—that's all."

With that she began to run about quickly over the ground, stopping every few seconds and peering into this or that grass-tuft, or behind this or that stone, moving her antennæ, all the while, in a very excited manner. Jack noticed that though she went in all sorts of directions, and often turned back and crossed where she had been before, so that, if her feet had been pencil-points and the ground paper, they would have drawn quite a little labyrinth on it, yet, on the whole, she made a sort of rough circle round the place where they had been standing, and seemed to like to examine one part thoroughly before she went on to another. She was so interested in the search, and paid so little attention to the children, that, once or twice, they thought of slipping off and getting away altogether, as the grass would have hidden them just as easily as the Cicada; but they were too frightened to do this, after what the Wasp had said, and besides, though it was dreadful to think of the poor Cicada being ill-treated, yet they couldn't help feeling interested, and wanting to see what would happen. "After all," Jack whispered to Maggie—for as they felt obliged to keep running after the Wasp, they were generally near her, and felt

afraid to talk out loud—"it *is* entomology, and it isn't our fault."

All at once, the Wasp made a sudden pounce on something behind a dead bough, and, the next moment, she came running out backwards, pulling the Cicada after her. "There he is!" she said, as she let him drop at a place where the ground was clear, and not far from the tree out of which they had all tumbled. "There he is, alive and fresh, as I told you. Come and look at him if you don't believe me."

Jack and Maggie would rather not have looked (although they were interested), as they could do no good, but they were afraid to disobey, and so came and stood beside the poor Cicada, as he lay on his back, looking quite dead, except that his eyes seemed to gaze up at them with a sorrowful expression—but they were too frightened to ask him any question, and, even if they had, he would not have been able to answer them now.

"It would be better if he were dead," Maggie said to herself, and both she and Jack were beginning to hope that he really was, when, all at once, his legs, which had hung quite limply, quivered a little, and his body seemed to give the ghost of a wriggle—not quite a wriggle itself.

"Dear me," said the Wasp, in a surprised tone of voice, as soon as she saw this, "I can't have stung him quite so nicely as I thought I had. Now that's your fault," she continued, looking angrily at Jack and Maggie. "Your being on his back—which is a thing I could not possibly have counted upon—has spoilt the nicety of my calculations, and prevented my making a workmanlike job of it. Well"—and here the sting came out again—"what have you to say for yourselves?"

If Jack and Maggie had had ever so much to say for themselves, they could hardly have said it then (they were so frightened), and still less, later on, if the Wasp had stung them. However, she seemed satisfied with having impressed them again, and it was this, perhaps, that made Jack begin to think that she didn't really mean to sting them, however fierce and angry she looked.

"After all," he said to Maggie, in a whisper, "we're only going through a book."

"I wish we were through it," Maggie whispered back again, but she too was beginning to feel a little less uneasy.

"However," the Wasp went on, in a more conversational tone, "that is easily rectified. A very slight application of my sting will do what is necessary."

As she said this she climbed on to the Cicada, whose legs were still shaking a little, and stung him again; exactly in what part she did, neither Jack nor Maggie could say, for they had both turned their heads away, but when they turned them back again the poor Cicada lay quite still, and even his eyes didn't seem to look at them any more.

"There," said the Wasp, in a quite satisfied manner, "he is now in quite the right state, and the next thing to do, I suppose, is to store him in my nursery-larder. That, however, will be a very laborious affair, as I shall have to pull him up the tree again, in order to fly down with him to it. Few things are more tiring—still, as a good mother, I must do it."

With that she seized the Cicada by one of his wings, and began dragging him towards the tree, as fast as she could, which was much faster than anyone would have thought possible, for although she was such a fine large wasp—or hornet, as she evidently considered

herself—still the Cicada was a good deal larger and heavier than herself, and the ground was not at all smooth or even, but had sticks, stones, and ant-heaps upon it that it was necessary either to go round or climb over. All this made it such an exertion that she often had to stop and rest herself, but at last she got to the tree, going backwards all the time, and, with great



She seized the Cicada by one of his wings, and began dragging him towards the tree

difficulty, began to drag the Cicada up it. But before she was higher up than a few inches, she found a place where she could stop and rest comfortably, and then Jack, though he was still rather nervous, couldn't help asking her a question. "Please, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," he said, "why have you to climb up a tree before you fly with—with the poor Ci——"

"Come, no nonsense," said the Wasp testily. "It's a sensible question, but ask it sensibly. Before I take my provisions to my nursery-larder—is *that* what you mean?"

"Yes, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," Jack answered, though he thought it was a dreadfully harsh way of talking.

"Why, you see," said the Wasp, as she rested one of her forefeet on the poor Cicada's broad back, and, with the other, gave a touch to her antennæ, "this great hulking fellow, here, is much stronger and heavier than I am, and, do what I can, when I fly off with him his weight drags me gradually downwards. You see, I receive no assistance, for, being paralysed, he cannot, of course, fly himself, and even if he could, yet having no proper sense of what is really for the best, he wouldn't go the way I wanted him to, I'm convinced."

"But you couldn't expect, Mrs Great Golden——" Jack was beginning.

"I expect no assistance from *anyone*," said the Wasp. "If I did, or if I wanted it, I might have asked *you* to help me in getting him here. I *think* I could have persuaded you to—yes, yes, you would have done so, I make no doubt" (here the tip of her sting just came out and went back again), "but that would have been beneath the dignity of a Great Golden Digger Wasp."

"Oh," said Jack—he said it in a respectful manner, but as the Wasp's sting always went back again, he was beginning to get accustomed to it.

"Yes," the Wasp continued, "self-help is the motto of our family, and therefore I am not complaining. I simply state the fact, I can receive no assistance, even from one upon whom I confer the very uncommon distinction of being live-nurse to my own children. Therefore, as I say, I am unable to rise from the ground with him; I can only fly downwards

from something at a greater elevation, and a tree is the most convenient. Now, if I can paralyse a cicada, at once, when I sting him, so that he doesn't struggle or make a fuss, then, if I have made my domestic arrangements near enough to the tree he is on, I can fly with him to the place at once. But if this is not so, or if I am not quite quick enough in stinging him, or don't sting him just in the right place—as may sometimes happen, we are none of us quite infallible—the foolish fellow is certain to make a scene, and down we both come to the ground. The only thing for me to do then, is to climb up the tree with him again, and, if my nursery-larder is some way off, I may have to climb and fly down from several more, before getting to it. Each flight takes me nearer, till at last, if I don't come right down on the very spot, I am, at least, near enough to drag him the rest of the way; but to drag him the whole way without his helping me in the least, is more than I can do, able and willing as I am. So now, perhaps, you understand."

"Yes, I think I do," said Jack.

"As it happens," the Digger Wasp continued, "my domestic arrangements are not, in this instance, far off, and if you walk to where they are you will soon see me come flying down upon the very spot. It would be a grand sight, and worth recording—still, if you don't care about seeing it, of course you needn't. It is only a permission—like the other"—and out the Wasp's sting came again, farther this time than the last, and with a still more threatening appearance.

"Oh, I think I'd like to, please, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack; "and Maggie would, too, I know."

"I am glad of it," said the Digger Wasp; "and you

will have no cause to repent your decision. To see a mother labouring, without any assistance, and in the face of great physical difficulties, for the support of her future family, is one of the most elevating sights in nature—it is also a very touching one. You hear me, I hope—or are you a pessimist?”

“Oh yes, I hear you, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp,” Jack said hastily, “and——”

“I thought you hadn’t, perhaps,” said the Digger Wasp, “as you didn’t say anything. However, after you have seen me will be the proper time for expressing enthusiasm. There, you’d better be starting now,” she continued, “and mind you’re there punctually—that’s all.”

“But how are we to get there?” asked Jack, who had no idea where the Wasp’s nursery was.

“Oh, that’s easy,” the Digger Wasp answered. “Just cross the comma in front of you, and then keep on in a perfectly straight line—there are no turnings. After a time you’ll come to a full stop—you can’t help it—and there you can wait for me, if I’m not there already. So now be off, for I can’t waste my time any longer.” And, as she said this, she went on dragging the Cicada up the tree.

Jack took hold of Maggie’s hand, and they began to run, following the directions that had been given them, till, rather suddenly, they both felt tired, and as if they must stop. So they both did—full—and, as they turned to look back, there was the Great Golden Digger Wasp coming slowly and laboriously towards them, through the air. But was it the Digger Wasp? At first it looked much more like the Cicada again, and it was he, certainly, but, as he got nearer, it was easy to see that *he* wasn’t flying at all, but that the

wings which whirled just above him, and which were much smaller than his own, were those of the Digger Wasp, who was astride on his back in the same way as Jack had been, only that she had three legs on each side instead of only one. With these long, strong legs of hers she was clasping the poor Cicada's body, whilst the tip of her long, pointed, venomous-looking abdomen was curled round under the end of his, and between his large shut wings. Holding the Cicada like this, the Digger Wasp just managed to carry him, but she could only fly slowly, and, every second, got nearer and nearer to the ground. As she came past Jack and Maggie, she was only just a little above them, and the next moment she had alighted with her burden. "Well," she said, "and what do you think of it? Twice my size and weight, and taken up a high tree first! All alone, and without so much as a thank-you for all the trouble I've had! But what will not maternal tenderness do?"

"Yes, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack, as he seemed expected to say something.

"I *hope* you're enthusiastic," said the Digger Wasp, "because if not, you must be out of tune—which is shocking. You saw me coming, didn't you?"

"Oh yes," said Jack, trying to look appreciative. "We saw you coming, both of us, and we both thought it very curious, and—and——"

"Beautiful?" the Digger Wasp suggested.

"Well, it looked very—very—funny," said Jack—he tried to say, "pretty," but somehow he was not able to—"I think it's very interesting," he added, as a compromise.

"And what do *you* say?" said the Digger Wasp, turning to Maggie, but Maggie, what between her fear

and dislike of her, and feeling very sorry for the poor Cicada, couldn't say anything at all. "However," she continued, "I see you have neither of you any proper understanding of what a mother's love is. It is therefore my duty, if you'll come a little nearer, to enlighten you on this highest of all earthly instincts."

Jack and Maggie came close up to the Digger Wasp—they had been standing as far from her as they thought they might do without giving offence—and then she said: "Do you know why I am called the Great Golden Digger Wasp?"

"I suppose it's because you're so big, and so handsome, and—and golden," said Jack.

"Pooh!" said the Digger Wasp, "that was not what I meant. Anybody can see *that*. But why am I called the Great Golden *Digger* Wasp? That's what I mean."

"I suppose it's because you dig," Jack ventured to suggest.

"That's not very difficult either," said the Wasp. "Yes; but how do I dig, and why do I dig, and so forth? That's the point, and as it's all famous you might be supposed to know something about it."

Jack tried to think, but he had not read about this particular wasp, and though he had heard her speak of her nursery-larder, yet he hadn't quite realised all she had meant by it, and, in fact, he didn't know, and was just going to say so, when the Digger Wasp answered for him.

"It is always best," she said, "to confess ignorance, however discreditable it may be. Well, I will now introduce you to my famous underground nurseries, or nursery-larders, as I have aptly termed them. The entrance is in our immediate neighbourhood. You have only to open the door and walk in."

Jack looked all about him, on the ground, and so did Maggie too—for though she couldn't bear the Digger Wasp, and was resolved not to speak to her, if she could help it, yet she couldn't help feeling interested—but neither of them could see anything, and Jack had to say so.

“If you *had* seen it,” said the Digger Wasp, “*perhaps* I should have stung you, because, when I made my domestic arrangements I didn't mean anyone to see them—so you may think yourselves lucky. However, here it is, and, when I've opened the door, we'll all go in.”

Whilst saying this, she had been running over the ground in an eager, excited sort of way, and, all at once, stopped quite close to Jack and Maggie, where it looked just the same as anywhere else. “I conceal it so skilfully,” she remarked, “that sometimes I even deceive myself, which is a feat indeed, and the greatest proof of cleverness that I know of. However, here's the door.”

As she said this, the Digger Wasp took up a little pebble in her mandibles, and dropped it to one side, and then did the same with another, and another. Perhaps she moved half-a-dozen, altogether, besides scraping and kicking away some dust with her feet, which made quite a little cloud in the air, and, when this had cleared away, Jack and Maggie saw that they were standing at the mouth of a neatly-made tunnel, which was just high enough to let them walk without stooping.

“Here we are,” said the Digger Wasp, when she had quite exposed the opening. “This is the grand entrance.”

“Is there another entrance then?” said Jack.

“Another one?” said the Digger Wasp, in a surprised tone of voice. “Why, isn't this enough for you?”

"Oh yes," said Jack, "but I thought, as you said it was the grand one, that there might be some others."

"Nonsense!" said the Digger Wasp. "If a building has only one entrance, then it's *the* entrance, and if it's grand, then it must be *the grand* entrance. I call this grand, and not one of my guests has ever complained of it."

"Oh no, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack (he saw that his question had not been a judicious one, and was glad nothing more disagreeable had come of it), "I'm sure they haven't."

"So am I," said the Digger Wasp, "though, to say the truth, I've never asked their opinion. However, you'll be seeing them shortly, and if you hear the very smallest complaint on the subject, do please let me know. I shall be really vexed if you don't. In the meantime——"

As the Digger Wasp said this, she made a little run to the Cicada, who was lying only a few inches off, and dragged him, head foremost, after her, into the mouth of her tunnel. "Now then," she said to Jack and Maggie, as she stopped just inside it, "you're coming in too, I suppose. Not to do so, you know, would be unfriendly, but, of course, if you wish to be unfriendly——"

"But it's so dark," said Jack, hesitating (as well he might) just at the entrance.

"Ignorance," said the Digger Wasp, "is always dark; but I, you know, represent knowledge, and may be able to throw a light on the subject."

It was a very funny thing that, as the Digger Wasp said this, the tunnel, which had looked as black as pitch, just before, began to be lit up with a soft emerald light—very pretty—which didn't seem to come from any-

where, and as the children followed her (for they had no choice) down the long, winding passage—it wound about a good deal—instead of getting darker and darker it got lighter and lighter. This enabled them to notice that the walls of the tunnel, which, of course, were only made of earth, looked smooth and worn, as if the Digger Wasp had been in and out of it several times, and as the Cicada’s body just fitted the passage, so that it was he, and not she, that rubbed against it, Maggie couldn’t help whispering to Jack: “Oh, Jack, I believe she’s been cruel to other cicadas as well.”

“It’s natural history, you know,” was all that Jack could whisper back again, in the way of consolation, and just then the Cicada—for it was only he they could see now, and not the Digger Wasp—stopped for a moment, and then seemed to give a sort of jerk to one side. The next moment he went—that is to say, he was pulled—on again, and they both saw the tunnel, filled with its funny light, stretching away before them. It was evident that they had turned up another passage, running out of the one they had been going down. Soon afterwards, Jack, who was leading, almost fell over the Cicada, which had stopped again, suddenly, and lay now almost level with the ground. The reason was that it had been pulled into a little oval pit at the end of the passage they were in, which was only a short one. The next moment the head of the Digger Wasp appeared, as she climbed on to the Cicada’s body, so that if Jack had really stumbled he would have stumbled on to her—of course he was very glad that he had not.

“Well,” said the Digger Wasp, “here we are, at last, and my labours should now soon be over. I have only to oviposit—which won’t take me above a minute or two—and maternal devotion will have been satisfied.”

"To oviposit?" said Jack—for he didn't understand the word.

"Don't ask me to express myself more plainly," said the Digger Wasp, "because I'm a lady, and must speak like one. Yes, certainly, to oviposit. This, you see, is the guest-chamber, as I call it for the present—one of my little nursery-larders it *will* be. I have others, of course; but, in my opinion, a nursery should have an active child in it, so, until there is one, the other is perhaps the more correct term, and I am always anxious to be *that*."

"Yes, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack.

"The guest-chamber, then," said the Digger Wasp. "And do you think you can guess who the guest is?"

"The poor—the Cicada, I suppose," said Jack, as he looked at the poor paralysed thing.

"Why, you're right, I declare," said the Digger Wasp (just as if it had been difficult), "and I hope you approve of my arrangements for his accommodation. You see, it's not too large, and as he can't move, *more* space is unnecessary. In fact, it fits *him*, and *he* is fitted for it; you would find it difficult, I think, to better that."

Jack had nothing very particular to say to this, and he kept wishing that he needn't say anything at all; but as Maggie wouldn't talk, and as the Digger Wasp seemed to demand conversation, he felt obliged to, for it might not have been safe to offend her, even now, though she did seem in a much more agreeable frame of mind—at any rate he thought he had better not try.

"But the—the guest-chamber" (he was going to say "hole") "doesn't quite fit the Cicada," he said, after a little—for he had just noticed this. "There's a part of it that isn't filled up."

"That's for my *dear* child," said the Digger Wasp,

in a very joyful tone of voice. "I must think of her, you know. When she's born (for I can't bear to think of it being a drone) then it will be the nursery, and the two will occupy it, together, in the most amicable manner possible."

"Will they?" said Jack, quite cheerfully, and even Maggie was made happier, for a moment, and said, "Will they really?"

"You'll see soon," said the Digger Wasp. "Just at present you mustn't disturb me, as I am about to perform the highest act of which even my nature is capable, and I should like to approach it in a suitable frame of mind."

Jack and Maggie didn't quite know what to think of this, but they were glad to be able to stand and say nothing, or only talk to each other in whispers, whilst the Digger Wasp, for her part, sat quite quietly on the body of the Cicada, with her head, which was towards them, held low, and her antennæ just quivering a little.

As for the Cicada, *his* head was the other way, and both Jack and Maggie were glad of this, for, even though he didn't seem to see them now, yet still they felt unable to look him in the face. All at once the Digger Wasp gave a little, excited buzz with her wings and said, "There! it is over. Once more my mission in life is accomplished. I have oviposited."

"Have you?" said Jack, without at all understanding what the Digger Wasp had done.

"Have I indeed!" said the Digger Wasp. "Do you think I could be in doubt in regard to such a matter? However, no offence was intended, and my feelings, at this moment, are of too elevated a nature to allow me to be angry. Come here," she continued, "and look at it. There"—this was to Jack, who had come, for

Maggie wouldn't—"that is my egg." As she said this she pulled down one of the Cicada's middle legs with her mandibles—taking it by the foot—and there, just under where the first joint of it had been when it was in its natural position, there lay a little white object, shaped like a spindle and about the size of a grain of wheat—perhaps it was just a little smaller. It seemed to be stuck quite firmly to the Cicada's body, as, although the latter was lying a little sideways, instead of quite flat on its back, it didn't roll off, but kept there quite easily. "There it is," said the Cicada again. "Look at it, and say what you like."

"Oh, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack, who began to understand now—he hadn't before—"then when you oviposited you laid an egg?"

"When I laid an egg I oviposited," said the Digger Wasp. "That is the more correct way of stating the fact, and, as I hinted before, I pique myself on being correct. Well, and so the next thing you want to know, I suppose, is when it will hatch."

"When will it, please?" asked Jack, for he saw that that was the question expected of him.

"In three days, at the latest," the Digger Wasp answered, "and until then, by an act of prevision on my part which you really *must* admire"—as she said this she let the Cicada's leg go again—"nothing whatever can interfere with it."

And, indeed, as soon as the leg was let go, it went back (just as an open door will swing to) into its more usual position, which was exactly over where the egg had been laid, so that it wasn't to be seen any more.

"There!" said the Digger Wasp. "Now is that an ingenious adaptation of ends to means, or isn't it? If you think it isn't, be perfectly frank and say so."

"I suppose it is," said Jack, though he didn't exactly follow the question; "but what would hurt the egg if it wasn't covered over?"

"I can't say what *would*," said the Digger Wasp, "but anything *might*. Now, however, nothing can, since our kind friend here, to whom I shall ever feel grateful, protects it, as you see, with his leg."

"He doesn't do it on purpose," said Jack—he put a great accent on the last two words, but was afraid to say anything *more* indignant.

"As to that," said the Digger Wasp, "we will not inquire too closely, but gratitude is a very correct frame of mind. Yes," she continued, "in three days, at latest, the egg will be hatched, and my little cherub will at once fall to."

"How do you mean, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp?" said Jack.

"Thank you for the reminder," said the Digger Wasp. "'Will at once do justice to the rich banquet spread out before her,' is more elegant, if not so concise."

"But where *is* the banquet?" asked Jack.

"Why, here, to be sure," said the Digger Wasp, looking down at the Cicada and giving him a pat with her forefoot. "Not so very far off, is it?"

"But," said Jack (he had not realised it properly before, and he felt shocked, even though it *was* entomology)—"but he's alive, you know."

"*And* fresh—to be sure he is," said the Digger Wasp. "Didn't you hear me say that he would keep? Of course I *could* have killed him without the smallest difficulty, but then, you see, he wouldn't keep—at least not long enough—and so—careful mother that I am!—I only paralyse him. By this masterly stratagem I keep him alive for my infant as long as

my infant requires him, and thus the high instinct of maternal affection, which, in a Great Golden Digger Wasp, attains its meridian, is satisfied."

"But he's eaten alive," said Jack, in a very sorrowful tone—as for Maggie, she felt miserable, and wanted to go away.

"Freshness guaranteed," said the Digger Wasp. "Admire my housekeeping! Properly to do so, however, actual observation is necessary, so, if you'll just come with me to Nursery-Larder No. 1, I'll show you the principle in operation."

"Oh, please, if you don't mind, Mrs Great Gol——" Jack was beginning.

"Mind!" said the Digger Wasp. "Why, I proposed it myself. One doesn't mind things that are to one's credit, you know."

"But I'd really rather——" said Jack.

"Down the passage again, first turning to the left, and straight on," said the Digger Wasp in a tone of command. "Dawdling not allowed, and remember I'm behind you."

As the Great Golden Digger Wasp said this, she made a sharp little buzzing with her wings, not loud, but very disagreeable, because it sounded angry, and she seemed so close behind Jack and Maggie, as they ran down the passage (for they didn't dare to look round), and buzzed so the whole time, that it really seemed as if they were being chased. When they got to where the passages joined, they would have very much liked to turn to the right (which would have brought them to the entrance) instead of to the left, but, of course, they were afraid to, and when they had run about a foot farther, they came to another little oval pit, with another cicada lying

in it, and Jack at once saw (for Maggie had turned her head to the wall and wouldn't look) that there was something upon him much larger than an egg. “Oh dear,” he said to himself, “the egg's hatched, and——”

“My eldest,” said the Digger Wasp—her antennæ



“My eldest,” said the Digger Wasp. “Did you ever see a more moving picture?”

came over Jack's shoulder as she said it, and they were trembling with emotion. “How beautifully white she is, and how deliciously fat. Did you ever see a more moving picture?”

The picture certainly did move Jack, but perhaps it was not quite in the way that the Digger Wasp meant. At any rate he didn't make any remark for some time, till, at last, the Digger Wasp said, rather pointedly: “It's no use asking *her* questions, because she's too young to answer them. *I* am her mother.”

"Where's her head, please, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp?" said Jack—he felt obliged to ask something, and, besides, he really didn't know where it was. Of course the young Digger Wasp was not at all like a grown-up one, but more like a soft white caterpillar, without legs—at least Jack couldn't see any—only she was so fat, at one end, that she looked almost round, and then went in suddenly, and got quite thin at the other. But he couldn't make out where this thin part ended, and wasn't quite sure whether it was the head or the tail. That was why he asked where her head was.

"Where is it?" repeated the Digger Wasp—it was quite evident that she thought it a foolish question—"why, in her food, to be sure, which is just where it should be. Just wait a minute, though, and you'll see it."

Almost as she said this (you see, she had a mother's prophetic eye) there was a funny motion on the part of the Digger Wasp caterpillar. The long part of her seemed to grow backwards into the round part, and, all at once, Jack saw a very little head at the end of it, which was lifted up into the air, and at the same time he noticed a small, round hole in the body of the Cicada. It was evident that the caterpillar's head and neck had been inside the hole, and had just been drawn back.

"There she is, bless her!" said the Digger Wasp, the instant the head had come out. "It is through that aperture, which, with the precocity of genius, she makes, herself, the instant after hatching, that she imbibes the living juices of the food which my motherly devotion has provided for her."

"Oh, is that it?" said Jack—but there was no cheerful ring in his voice.

"Yes, that's it," said the Digger Wasp. "You see how it works now, I suppose?"

"Yes, I see," said Jack. (He would much rather not have seen.)

"All in all to one another," said the Digger Wasp, quite rapturously. "He lives for her, and she lives on and in him. Oh, it's an idyll! Now, isn't it?"

Jack, however, didn't know what an idyll was, and the Digger Wasp, who perhaps guessed this, went on without waiting. "You see," she explained, "it's so beneficent. That, perhaps, is the point which emerges most clearly. No wonder I'm an optimist. I can't help it. Well, if there's anything else I can help you to appreciate——"

"Oh, I think I understand it, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack, "but" (he felt he must express his opinion, even though it might be dangerous), "isn't it rather hard——?"

"You allude to the outer shell of our amiable friend here," said the Digger Wasp, with another pat of the Cicada. "Yes, it is hard, but there are softer parts here and there—*sutures*, I think, is the proper word—and my little cherub is clever enough to find out one of them. You see, I lay my egg on just the right place for her to do so, and thus facilitate her efforts."

"I daresay it's all right for her," Jack was beginning, "but——"

"As right as right can be," said the Digger Wasp. "Everything is arranged beforehand, I assure you—there is the nicest adjustment. For instance, you see how flexible my dear child's neck is, and how she can make it long or short, just as she pleases" (and indeed, Jack had noticed this). "Well, when she wants to put her head inside her benefactor, so as to partake of him

—which he *never* denies her—she makes it long, and when she has had enough of him, and wishes to bring it out again, she makes it short. As she gets older—bless her!—of course she grows larger, and the larger she grows the longer she can make her *dear* neck, till at last she can reach down with it to the very bottom of our friend's now well-nigh empty shell, so as to suck up his last remaining juices—the dregs of his affection, so to speak. If she couldn't, my darling would perhaps starve, or at least not derive sufficient nutriment to support her growth—a shocking idea! But everything has been so well thought out!”

“And how long does it go on?” said Jack, quite indignantly, although he was afraid of offending the Digger Wasp.

“In a week,” said the Digger Wasp, “my child will be full-fed and ready to enter on the real business of life. Hitherto it has been all enjoyment—one might almost say play—but that, of course, can't last for ever.”

“I think it lasts quite long enough,” said Jack.

“It is all very properly managed, I make no doubt,” said the Digger Wasp—“most properly. Still, though it may be wrong, one cannot sometimes help wishing that those early days of pure and innocent happiness might have a longer continuance. You might wish that yourself, you know, for you're only a child.”

“But *I* don't eat things alive,” Jack answered.

“I hope your mother looks after you,” said the Digger Wasp in a grave tone of voice. “However, let us keep to the matter in hand. At the end of a week, being full-fed, my beauty makes herself a most ingenious cocoon—using silk and earth for the purpose—and in this she sleeps through the winter, side by side with the companion of her infancy, who has now

become a dry, lifeless husk. If she wanted anything more to eat, *now*, she couldn't get it, and so would starve, but, by a clever yet simple expedient, she requires nothing. When the winter is over she makes her final transformation, and becomes, in a fuller sense, that pride of the universe, a female Great Golden Digger Wasp—I am not considering the case of a mere drone. Then, in her turn, my dear one will feel the call of motherly affection, and provide as she was provided for, according to a well-known rule."

"What rule's that?" asked Jack.

"The Great Golden Digger Wasp rule," said the Great Golden Digger Wasp, "which says that you must do to cicadas, for others, what others have done to cicadas, for you. By adhering to this simple, yet beautiful maxim, the cycle of motherly love and devotion moves unendingly on."

"But——" began Jack.

"One moment, if you please," said the Digger Wasp. "I should like to enjoy the luxury of a really great thought. Well, now I've enjoyed it, and shall be happy to hear any reflection *you* may have to make."

"If you mean that you'd like to know what I think, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp," said Jack, "then what I think is that it's all very well for *you*, but if you were to ask the poor Cicada's opinion *he* wouldn't agree with you."

"Why, he agrees with my children," said the Digger Wasp. "Did you ever see a healthier-looking baby than the one we've been admiring?"

"But that's not what I mean," said Jack.

"And he *did* agree with *me* just as well," said the Digger Wasp. "You see, we have the same constitutions."

"But I don't mean that, I tell you," said Jack very angrily.

"Why, whatever do you mean then?" said the Digger Wasp. "Explain yourself."

"What I mean is," said Jack—he was so angry by this time that he had forgotten all about the Digger Wasp's sting—"that it isn't fair, and it's very cruel, and it's not at all right, and——"

"Oh, if you think *that*," said the Digger Wasp, "I'm afraid you *must* be out of tune, because when you're *in* tune, everything's right. Well, I wish I could help you."

"Help me about what?" said Jack.

"Why, to *get* into tune, to be sure," said the Digger Wasp. "The best way, perhaps, is to be good, and then you'll see good in everything, because you put yourself there—another of our elevated maxims. Of course if you're *bad* you put bad, which makes it your fault."

"As for being good," said Jack, "I don't understand how——"

"Well then, ask *me*," said the Digger Wasp. "On such a subject I, as a Great Golden Digger Wasp, may be able to throw some light."

All this time Maggie had had her face turned to the wall of the tunnel, and she hadn't seen anything, but she understood it all, and knew that the Cicada was being eaten alive, slowly, and couldn't help himself; and to hear the Digger Wasp, who had done it all, talking in a virtuous way about it, made her feel so very indignant that at last she couldn't keep quiet any longer, but called out: "I don't care what you do to me, Mrs Great Golden Digger Wasp, and you may sting me if you like, but for one creature to be *horribly* cruel to some other creature is a very funny

way of being good, and I don't believe you can throw *any* light on *that* subject."

As she said these last words the Digger Wasp gave a buzz that was like a scream, so sharp and shrill it was, and, the next moment, everything was dark except one little speck of light that was very faint and seemed a very long way off. Jack and Maggie caught hold of each other's hands, and tore down the tunnel together towards where the light seemed to come from, which was towards the mouth of the burrow. It was something like the one that had been all around them, only very much paler—white, almost, instead of green. But now it shone only in that one place. Everywhere else was quite dark, and the scream of the wasp seemed close at their backs, and every moment they expected to be stung, and were horribly frightened. Still, they were not stung, and the light got nearer and nearer, till, at last, they began to see something behind it, from which it seemed to come.

"I wonder what it is that's making it?" said Jack. "Oh, I know. It's—it's——"

CHAPTER XIV

A QUEER TRIAL WITHOUT ANY VERDICT

“ONLY your little Glowworm,” said a voice which was very soft and quiet, and which, though neither Jack nor Maggie remembered ever to have heard it before, yet, somehow, sounded familiar. “You know me, of course, and this too, I daresay, though you wouldn’t have noticed it so much. But you’ve seen it all before.”

“This” seemed to refer to all round about, and as Jack and Maggie looked, it certainly did seem to them as if they were sitting on their own garden lawn, and the few foreign trees which were growing there looked like ones that they knew, and not a bit like parts of a tropical forest, or even of the forests where they had been lately, which were not tropical but only North American. “Are we at home, Jack?” Maggie said at last, looking at her brother in a half-surprised way.

“*I* don’t know, I’m sure,” said Jack. “It looks like it—something—but then gardens are all like each other, and besides there’s a church and—and other things——”

“Just the old garden and the field and the church beyond it,” said the soft voice again, “and the old light, you know, to complete the picture—it would be nothing without it. They generally put us into one like that, and *I* think it’s a pretty one—*I’m* quite contented.”

Jack knew what it was, then, directly, and explained it to Maggie. “We’re in another one,” he said (mean-

ing another chapter), "and it begins in England, and the picture's on the very first page—with a glowworm—but it won't stay there long, and we'll get to much brighter ones—it's 'Luminous Insects,' you know."

"The old light's the best, *I* think," said the Glowworm. "The old garden with the field and the church beyond it, and my husband flying down to me. You may not have noticed him, perhaps, because *he* is not luminous. But don't blame him—it's not his fault, you know, and he does his best."

"Is it only you that shine, Mrs Glowworm?" asked Maggie.

"Yes, only I," said the Glowworm, "my husband does *not*. You see, it's divided in that way—I shine and he has the pleasure of seeing me. My light attracts him, and so he comes flying towards me (for he can fly), but he never reaches me, and I'm always shining and waiting."

"I don't understand that," said Maggie.

"Why, it's arranged so," said the Glowworm. "It's here, on my abdomen, that the luminous or shining parts are situated, but my husband, you see, has no shining parts, so *he* can't shine. He does his best to, I'm sure, but he can't."

"But it says in some books that your husband shines, too, Mrs Glowworm," said Jack.

"Ah well, I've never seen him," said the Glowworm resignedly. "Ever since we've been here he's been just the same, and we've never been anywhere else. Other husbands may, perhaps, but he does not. You can see that for yourself" (and indeed it was quite true that, in the picture, at any rate, the male glowworm was not represented as shining).

"But it's not that that I mean," said Maggie. "I

mean, why does he never reach you if he's always flying towards you, as you say?"

"I sometimes wonder myself," said the Glowworm, "but he never does, and I just sit here, and shine, and wait for him. It's just the old garden, you know, with the field, and the church beyond it—the old picture, though how *you* ever got into it I'm sure I can't say. You usen't to be here, I'm sure."

"Whatever does she mean?" said Maggie to Jack. "I don't understand her a bit."

"I do, *I* know what it all means," said Jack, as a sudden idea occurred to him. "It's what she says, and we've got into the picture instead of the real chapter. That's why she doesn't move and can't do anything—one can't, you know, in a picture—and why it all seems funny and she doesn't seem to shine properly, because it's white, like paper, you know—they're not coloured illustrations. That's it, Maggie, we're only in a picture, and if we can't get out of it I don't know what we're to do."

Maggie made a great effort to move when she heard this, but somehow she seemed fixed, and couldn't get anywhere, and it was just the same with Jack, though they had neither of them noticed it before. They were both in a great fright, and, all the while, the Glowworm, who didn't move a bit more than they did, kept saying, in the same quiet way: "Just the old garden, with the field and the church beyond it, and my husband—who does *not* shine—flying down to me, but he never gets any nearer—the same old picture, you know."

"But we want to get out of it," said Maggie, struggling violently—though it's very difficult to struggle when one's fixed—and as she said this, something seemed to bend, or crumple, or tear, or *something*—she

hardly knew what, but she was able to move again, and so was Jack, and then the Glowworm, with its very faint light, which had hardly seemed like a real one, as well as the garden, which, at first, she had thought her own, with the field and the church beyond it—the whole picture, in fact—was gone. Instead, there was something quite different, and they were certainly in another part of the world, but what part it was was not quite easy to say, or at least not for long, for it all kept changing and shifting from one thing to another. At one time it seemed as if great tropical forests, like those of Brazil or Nicaragua, were all around them, and then, all at once, these were gone, and a very cultivated country, but with not at all a familiar appearance, was there instead. There were people working in it, with curious straw hats on their heads, and as they had pig-tails, and their skin was of a light yellow colour, both Jack and Maggie were certain that they were Chinese—especially as they saw a pagoda or two in the distance—but, all at once, again, they began to look darker, and had no pig-tails, and the country was as like Africa as any country that one has only read about, and not seen, can be like a real one. It almost seemed as if the different countries were fighting for which should come first—perhaps, Jack thought, because of the different insects in them who all wanted to begin—and if that was it, it ended in a victory for China, for the rice-fields and pagodas and bamboos and other things came back and didn't go away again (or at least not directly), and one of the other things was a large handsome tree, under which Jack and Maggie were sitting, whilst, just in front of them, on a root which projected a little above the ground, was one of the strangest-looking insects they had ever seen.

In a way, too, he might be called one of the handsomest, for his wing-cases, which covered his whole body, like a penthouse, and so made the principal part of him to look at, were bright green, with golden bands and spots upon them, and the wings underneath, which were something like a grasshopper's, were all of a golden yellow colour, except at their ends where there was a broad marking of brown—but of course they were only seen properly when he lifted up his wing-cases, and opened them. His body, when one saw that, was yellow too, with black stripes upon it, and his head, or rather his nose—for it had more that appearance—was vermilion at the tip, and striped with vermilion and yellow for the rest of the way down. But this nose, or whatever it was, was so extraordinary that both Jack and Maggie thought it more funny than beautiful, and kept wondering at it instead of admiring it. It was very long and rather thin—something the shape of a cucumber, Maggie thought—only quite hollow, and almost transparent. Altogether it was one of the queerest appendages ever seen upon any animal, and made its owner look less like some new kind of grasshopper, without any long legs to hop with, than he otherwise would have done. As it was, there was no other insect to compare him with, except in the matter of his size, and even that would be difficult because of his peculiar shape—but he was about an inch and a half long.

This wonderful insect, as soon as he saw that Jack and Maggie were looking at him, turned round—for he had been facing towards the tree before—and made them three little bows, only they were more like what the Chinese call *kow-tows*, because, each time, he hit his long, vermilion-striped nose—which seemed all a part

of his head—against the ground. Jack and Maggie both made an inclination in return, though it wasn't quite the same sort of one, and then the funny insect said: "So you've found me, at last. Delighted, I'm sure. I come first, of course."

"Oh, do you, sir?" said Maggie, not quite knowing what she ought to say.



"So you've found me, at last. Delighted, I'm sure," said the chief representative of the *Fulgoridæ*

"Well, what do *you* think?" said the funny insect. "It's 'Luminous Insects' now, you know, and I, as chief representative of the *Fulgoridæ*, must be allowed to take precedence of all others. My candle, as it has been somewhat inadequately called——"

"Cannot for a moment compete with my lantern—a term which by no means does it justice," said a voice, which was not quite that of the first speaker, though a good deal like it, and, in a moment, half the landscape

around had changed to the great South American forests again, and there, on one of the trees belonging to them, as close as the first funny insect, and almost beside him (for the roots of the two trees interlaced), sat another one, still funnier than he was, if that were possible, though in the same kind of way. For he too had the head shaped in this curious fashion, only that instead of being long and narrow, it was long, and broad as well, and swelled out at the end instead of coming to a point. All over it there were broad bands and spots, of a mauve or yellowish-brown colour, as were the markings on the new insect's wing-cases, and the wings underneath them, which it had opened several times already on purpose to show. Also, on the upper part of each wing there was a great painted eye, something like those on the wings of a peacock butterfly, and these were evidently the great things to look at. But there was no gold or vermilion anywhere, and, in fact, though the new insect was a much larger one than the other, it was not nearly so brightly coloured. But that, of course, would not matter at all, as far as the brightness of its light was concerned, and if the great hollow swelling in front of its head was really a lantern, as the new funny insect said it was, then it was much the larger of the two, and might be supposed to give a greater illumination.

"I am the *Great Lantern Fly*—*Fulgora lanternaria*—of South America," said the new funny insect, continuing its first remark, and with a marked emphasis on the first word of its name.

"I am the *Fulgora candelaria*, of China," said the first funny insect, in an equally impressive tone of voice.

"The Candle Fly, that is," said the second one, "but

you're not the *Great* Candle Fly, whereas *I* am the *Great* Lantern Fly."

"If it comes to lanterns, I've got one as well as you," said the Candle Fly, "and *mine's* a Chinese lantern. My candle's inside it, you know."

"Don't try and hold it to me," said the Great Lantern Fly, "because it's well known that you can't."

"I can't now," said the Candle Fly, "of course, because it's the day and not the night."

"You may think yourself very lucky," the Great Lantern Fly retorted, "that it isn't the night and not the day. I'd soon shine you down, if it were. Why, what's a mere candle to a *great* lantern? By virtue of my prefix I take precedence."

"*You!*" said the Candle Fly contemptuously. "Why, you're not even in the first line."

The Great Lantern Fly looked extremely vexed at this, and seemed about to make a passionate reply—evidently it was a sore point. However, he contained himself, and said with dignity: "I think it would become you to remember that I occupy three whole paragraphs to your one—which is shared."

"But which precedes your three, all the same," said the Candle Fly. "How do you account for that?"

The Great Lantern Fly had to contain himself a second time, before he answered: "That is to make my *entrée* more effective. When I *do* appear, *you* are entirely snuffed out."

"That," said the Candle Fly, "is not the correct way of stating it. I end before you begin, and, until I do, *you* don't shine."

"Why, I could put you inside my lantern," said the Great Lantern Fly, drawing himself up, so as to look as big as possible.

"If you *want* to come first, you'd better," said the Candle Fly—"but your light would be *borrowed* then, you know."

Here it became necessary for the Great Lantern Fly to make a third, and still greater, effort to contain himself, and whilst he was making it a soft voice, quite near them, entered into the conversation.

"The question is," it said—and there was the Glowworm again, but not fixed as she had been, and with a proper green light now—"the question is if either of you are really luminous. It's been doubtful, you know—some would say more than doubtful—for a great many years."

"Not luminous! Then why am I *Fulgora lanternaria*?" said the Great Lantern Fly.

"And why am I *F. candelaria*, with a Chinese lantern?" said the Candle Fly.

"The question is if it really *is* a lantern," said the Glowworm.

"*Lanternaria* is a lantern-bearer, anyhow," said the Great Lantern Fly. "It's Latin for that, you know."

"And *candelaria* is the bearer of a candle," said the Candle Fly—"at least I suppose so, only it must mean a very superior one."

"The question is," said the Glowworm again—it was always the same soft, quiet voice, just like her light, that she spoke in—"if it isn't all a mistake. They *call* you flies, you know, but you're not *really* flies, so perhaps you're not really lantern- or candle-flies, either. And they call me a worm, which is an insult merely—only I put up with it."

"*Do* you?" said the Great Lantern Fly, in a very lofty tone of voice.

"Yes," said the Glowworm, "that, upon consideration,

is the line of conduct which I have decided to pursue. But I do glow, you know, as they say, and the one thing balances the other."

"I should like to hear anyone say that *I don't*," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"You will, perhaps, soon," answered the Glowworm. "If there's any evidence," she continued, "we might have a trial, you know, and make them the judges."



The two funny insects bowed to each other

With which suggestion she curtsied to Jack and Maggie (who were taken quite by surprise), and then said, "You may wonder, perhaps, at meeting me here—so *very* far from home—but I have been introduced as a standard of comparison. That's why they know me," she added, turning again to the two funny insects, who certainly did seem to know her. "Well, what do you say? Are you agreeable?"

"To a lady—always," said the Great Lantern Fly, bowing. "I would be the last," he continued, with dignity, "to shun an investigation."

"No, you wouldn't," said the Candle Fly brusquely, "because I would. So there!"

The Great Lantern Fly contained himself for the fourth time. "If there *is* to be a trial," he remarked, "we must be friends whilst it lasts, because, you see, we're together."

"I suppose we are," said the Candle Fly.

"Why, we're both attacked in the same way," said the Great Lantern Fly. "The family honour is directly at stake. Well, do you agree?"

"There is no other course," said the Candle Fly, on which the two funny insects bowed and *kow-towed*, first to each other, and then, in a still more formal manner, to Jack and Maggie—it was evident that they were accepted by both of them, as the judges.

"But wouldn't it be better to wait till the night comes?" said Jack, "because then we could see if you shine in the dark or not."

"That would take too long," said the Great Lantern Fly very decisively.

"It might go on for years," said the Candle Fly.

"A hundred years, perhaps, or even two hundred," the Great Lantern Fly added.

"Good gracious!" said Maggie, "why, how can that be?"—and Jack didn't understand it at all, either.

"The question is," said the Great Lantern Fly, "not whether we always light our lanterns, but whether we ever do. It's impossible to settle that in a night, you know."

"Quite," said the Candle Fly.

"But surely if you *wanted* to light them——" said Jack.

"But supposing we *didn't* want to——" the Candle Fly objected.

"Then, of course, we wouldn't," said the Great Lantern Fly, "but *that* wouldn't prove anything."

"It would be merely negative evidence," said the Candle Fly, "and, as it happens, I *don't* want to light my candle to-night."

"Neither do I my lantern," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"But however are we to find out then?" said Maggie, feeling quite bewildered.

"It's a question of evidence," said the Great Lantern Fly. "If we ever did light them that shows we could light them, and if we could light them that shows we can—because we haven't changed, you know. Then, of course, if we can light them, we do, when we want to; but as for waiting till we do want to, we should soon tire you out."

"My learned *friend* has put it very clearly," said the Candle Fly, with a *kow-tow* to the Great Lantern Fly. "The proper way is to call the witnesses. Perhaps my learned friend would like to begin."

The Great Lantern Fly looked very pleased at this, and bowed in a pompous manner to the Candle Fly. "With my learned *friend's* permission," he said. "Witness No. 1. Madame Merian."

"The well-known French artist and traveller," said the Glowworm, in an undertone, to Jack and Maggie (who had both started at the sudden way in which the Great Lantern Fly pronounced the last words), and, all at once, there was a lady standing there—a very pleasant-looking lady, dressed in a way that was stylish, but not very modern-looking, and holding a large, thin volume under her arm. It was impossible to say how she had got there, for, although the Great Lantern Fly had called out her name just as if he was announcing

her entrance, she didn't walk in, in the usual way—she couldn't, in fact, because there was no room, and no door to walk through, but—somehow, there she was, and, as soon as she was there, she opened her large book, which Jack and Maggie could see was full of beautiful, coloured drawings of all sorts of insects and flowers, and read something out of it. It was in Latin (which seemed to please all the insects), but, somehow, both Jack and Maggie understood what it meant, which was this: "Once, before I knew that they shone at night, the Indians brought me a great many of these lantern flies."

"*Great lantern flies,*" said the Great Lantern Fly, interrupting, but politely. "Excuse me, but you mean us, of course, and we *are* 'great,' are we not?"

"*Mais oui!*" said the French Lady (and the French seemed to translate itself, just as the Latin had done). "*Cela s'entend, il n'y a pas de doute, la dessus.*" And as she said this (which produced a very low bow from the Great Lantern Fly) she turned her book outwards, so that everyone could see it, and there was a beautiful, coloured picture of several great lantern flies, some flying and some sitting on the leaves of a plant, just like the one in front of them.

"She painted them herself," said the Great Lantern Fly proudly; "though not flattered, they are the finest portraits in existence."

"*Helas, tu me flattes,*" said the French Lady (she and the Great Lantern Fly were evidently on very friendly terms). "*Mais continuons, ou plutot recommençons.*" Then she went on: "Once, before I knew that they shone at night, the Indians brought me a great many of these *great lantern flies*" (there was another very low bow here), "which I shut up in a large wooden



An immense red book moved forward in a curious shuffling way, using its pages like legs

box. In the night they made such a noise that I woke in a fright" (here the Great Lantern Fly chuckled audibly) "and ordered a light to be brought, not knowing from whence the noise proceeded. So soon as we found that it came from the box, we opened it, but were still more alarmed, and let it fall to the ground, in a fright, at seeing a flame of fire come out of it, and as many great lantern flies as came out of the box—so many flames of fire came out with them. When we found this to be the case we recovered from our fright, and again collected the insects, highly admiring their splendid appearance."

Here the French Lady disappeared so suddenly that the Great Lantern Fly was only able to make her half of another low bow, when she spoke of his "splendid appearance."

"It concludes her evidence, you see," said the Glowworm, "and there will be no cross-examinations, because we want to keep our tempers, if we can."

"Then we'd better not have the next witness," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"Oh, I think we must," said the Glowworm persuasively. "You see, he's so very important."

"*That's* not evidence," said the Great Lantern Fly, sharply. "However, he contradicts himself. Well then——" And then he called out, in the same sudden way as he had before, when announcing the French Lady: "The Encyclopædia Britannica!"

An immense red book, with "Encyclopædia Britannica Volume XIV." printed across its back, answered this summons, and moved forward in a curious shuffling way, using its pages like legs. Its gait was slow and heavy, and its whole action laborious.

"No one could carry it, you see," said the Glow-

worm, who seemed quite fond of explaining things, "because of the great weight which attaches to all that it says, and when you think of all that it does say—which is what makes *it*, you know——"

"Silence!" said the great red book, in a very authoritative voice, and then it opened of itself at the right place—which Maggie saw was page 290—and began to read itself out. This was the most essential part of what it read: "As time wore on, many intelligent naturalists, and other travellers, visited both South America and China, and they concluded that the light must be produced only under very exceptional conditions, or that the original statement was an error, for they could not detect any luminosity, nor, as a rule, was such a property believed in by the natives of the regions."

"As if we didn't know our own property!" said the Great Lantern Fly contemptuously; but the Glowworm whispered, "Hush! it's not finished," and, after a marked pause, the great red volume went on: "Quite recently many naturalists of undoubted authority have resided, for years, in the districts where these insects occur, without having personally detected luminosity (though directly in search of it) and without obtaining any indications of the existence of such a belief in the minds of the natives. On the other hand, there have been a few travellers who have professed to be able to confirm Madame Merian's statements, both from personal observation and from information derived from native sources."

"We must call *them*," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"It would certainly seem so," said the Glowworm, "but, you see, there's a difficulty, since at this stage, we don't know who they are."

"Now that's *your* fault," said the Great Lantern Fly, with a reproachful glance at the Encyclopædia Britannica. "You should have given their names, you know."

"And their statements, too," said the Candle Fly.

"Do you call *that* a fair resumé?" said the Great Lantern Fly, still more reproachfully. "Why, you deserve to be dog-eared."

"And put down, open, face downwards," added the Candle Fly.

"And dropped," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"If you seek to discredit me, gentlemen," said the Encyclopædia Britannica, with dignity, "*that*, you know, is impossible. I proceed: 'Possibly the last of these was within the last twenty years, and his assertion concerned *F. candelaria*——'"

"Hear, hear!" said the Candle Fly.

"And upon his statement——" the Encyclopædia Britannica continued.

"Quote it!" cried the Candle Fly.

"How dare you suppress material evidence?" said the Great Lantern Fly.

The great red book seemed to turn just a little redder, but it made no answer (perhaps because it hadn't any to make) and went on: "—upon his statement an entomologist of repute, lately deceased, maintained, to the last, his belief in the luminous powers."

"Name him," shouted the Great Lantern Fly.

"Or go back and stay on your shelf," said the Candle Fly.

"Till you become open-minded, and that's a life sentence," added the Great Lantern Fly.

"I appeal to the court," said the Encyclopædia Britannica.

"He must finish, you know," said the Glowworm, who seemed to think herself the court, on which the Encyclopædia Britannica finished, in these words: "With him all faith in this direction has probably passed away. It is not for us to attempt to define the reasons for Madame Merian's positive and circumstantial statements. The preponderance of negative testimony is so crushingly great that *Fulgora* may be regarded as eliminated from the category of luminous insects."

"Did you ever hear anything so unjust?" said the Great Lantern Fly, in a passion. "Just because some people haven't seen us."

"And those who have, except one, are not allowed to speak," said the Candle Fly. "Disgraceful!"

"But you're not going to leave the court yet," said the Great Lantern Fly (for the great red volume was beginning to shuffle off). "You've got to stultify yourself, you know."

The Encyclopædia Britannica blushed even through its crimson binding, at this, and the next moment a facsimile of itself, but with "Volume XVIII.," instead of "Volume XIV.," printed on its back, stood beside it, and, opening in the same way (it was at p. 814), read, by a similar process, as follows: "The Lantern Flies (*Fulgora*) carry their light at the extremity of a long, curved proboscis."

"There!" said the Great Lantern Fly triumphantly. "Could anything be plainer than that? I submit," he continued, appealing to the Glowworm, "that this witness has stultified himself."

"Which one do you mean?" said the Glowworm, "because——"

"I have not, if he means me," said Volume XIV. indignantly. "I adhere to the statement I made."

"So do I, if he means me," said Volume XVIII. "I'm as authoritative as you, you know," it added, looking at Volume XIV.

"Not more so," retorted Volume XIV. "We are both of us incontrovertible."

"Then why do you controvert me?" said Volume XVIII. with asperity.

"If it comes to that," said Volume XIV., "it's you who have controverted me. I come first, you know."

"Which makes me more up to date," said Volume XVIII.

"That's nonsense," said Volume XIV., "because we're both the latest edition. So don't let *us* disagree," it added; "that would be most unseemly."

"But how can we *agree* when we differ?" said Volume XVIII.; "unless," it added, after seeming to ponder a little, "we agree *to* differ, which, perhaps, is the best way out of it."

"We'd better keep it to ourselves then," said Volume XIV. "It would look so bad, you know, and have a disturbing effect on the public mind."

"You should have thought of that before," said Volume XVIII. "It's come out in court, now."

"It was your fault," said Volume XIV. angrily. "You shouldn't have appeared."

"What! and let you override me?" said Volume XVIII. "Very fine indeed, but here I am, you see, and I've got to be taken as well as you."

"Yes, I think we should treat them alike," said the Glowworm, "because, you see, they're parts of the same work."

"Which makes them one witness," said the Great Lantern Fly, "so, as the evidence is contradictory, it's of no value."

At this, each of the two volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica shut itself with a loud clap, and observing, in one and the same tone, and both together (so that it sounded like one voice), "I am absolutely incontrovertible till my next edition," walked off, cover in cover, which was a very interesting and peculiar thing to see.

"There's an end of *them*," said the Great Lantern Fly. "I rely on my first witness."

"It's my turn now," said the Candle Fly. "Chinese Law, if you please"—and immediately there was a very old and wrinkled Chinaman, in a long embroidered silk gown, and a cap with a peacock's feather in it, standing at a porcelain reading-desk, with a large book in Chinese characters before him. Maggie felt sure he was a mandarin, and whispered so to Jack, who agreed with her.

"No whispering in court," said the Candle Fly indignantly, looking at Jack and Maggie.

"They're the judges, you know," said the Glowworm, in her soft little voice.

"That makes it worse," the Candle Fly retorted, "because *they* ought to set an example. Silence, I *beg*."

Of course there was silence after that, and, as soon as there was, the mandarin—for he was one—read out of his book, in Chinese—only it was as easy to follow as either the French or the Latin: "Sub-section nine thousand, edict one million and two. No young women to keep Candle Flies under any pretext whatever."

"So as not to make use of us, as signals, don't you see," the Candle Fly explained, "because, at their age, they mightn't always have done so discreetly."

"How do you know that was what it meant?" asked Jack.

"Anyhow it must have been to do with our candles," said the Candle Fly, "because they might keep other insects."

"That settles it," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"I don't think that's quite made out," said the Glowworm. "Perhaps the witness had better give a commentary on the meaning of the act?"

"Can you do that shortly?" said the Candle Fly to the mandarin, who shook his head in an irritated manner, and said, "Certainly not."

"Then as it's perfectly obvious," said the Candle Fly, "and time presses, we'd better not have it."

"Next witness, then," said the Glowworm, and the Candle Fly immediately called out, "Dr Phipson, a distinguished authority on the subject of phosphorescence."

A European gentleman who looked scientific here took the place of the mandarin, and, pulling a book out of his coat-tail pocket, read in a hurried manner—for *his* time was of consequence: "It is from these appendages, the sides of which are transparent, that the phosphoric light appears."

"There," said the Candle Fly, "you hear that. By 'appendages' he means our lanterns. But he has more, of importance, to add."

"It is said," continued the scientific gentleman, "that the trunk of a tree covered with numerous individuals of *Fulgora candelaria*, some in movement, others in repose, presents a very grand spectacle, impossible to describe, but which may be witnessed, sometimes, in China."

"That's what *I* call evidence," said the Candle Fly delightedly, "'A very grand spectacle.'"

“Yes, but *who* says it?” the Glowworm asked.
 “That’s the point, you know.”

“Why, he did, of course,” said the Candle Fly (for Dr Phipson, after giving his evidence, had hurried away).
 “Didn’t you hear him?”

“He said that it *is* said—that’s all,” said the Glowworm.

“Which proves that it’s matter of notoriety,” said the Candle Fly, “and that’s enough, by itself, you know.”

“That exhausts the evidence,” said the Great Lantern Fly.

“It does not,” replied a voice which had not been heard before, and there was a third funny insect that had a strong family resemblance to the other two, but was much more like the Chinese than the South American one. “It does *not* exhaust the evidence. I represent the African branch of the family, and demand that my witnesses be heard.”

“You’re a little late,” said the Glowworm doubtfully.

“You ought to have waited,” said the African Lantern Fly, in a hurt tone of voice. “However, I excuse you, so now let’s get on. *Keetchwa Kand-tah.*”

“What do you mean by that?” said the Great Lantern Fly.

“It’ll come out in the evidence,” his African relative answered. “*You’ll see. Keetchwa Kand-tah.*”

“If it’s a language, we don’t understand it,” said the Candle Fly (and Jack and Maggie didn’t either, this time). “Speak English—or else Chinese. These barbarous dialects are not creditable to our family.”

“Call your witnesses,” said the Great Lantern Fly, “and don’t keep us waiting.”

The African Lantern Fly instantly called out, “Dr

Packard, the great entomologist—Mr Caleb Cooke, of Salem, his friend.”

Both gentlemen were there directly, and one of them read as follows from a book with “Packard’s Guide to Insects” printed upon it: “Mr Caleb Cooke, of Salem, who resided several years in Zanzibar, Africa, told me that the lantern fly is said by the natives to be luminous. They state that the long snout——”

“I object,” said the African Lantern Fly.

“Substitute ‘lantern,’ ” said the Great Lantern Fly, looking severely at the witness, who, however, went on without seeming to notice him: “—lights up in the night, and, in describing it, say its head is like a lamp—*Keetchwa Kand-tah.*”

“I told you it would come out,” said the African Lantern Fly. “*They* know what they’re talking about, of course.”

“Why doesn’t the other say something?” said the Great Lantern Fly. “It’s his statement, you know.”

“He’s a silent witness,” said the African Lantern Fly, which explanation seemed to satisfy everyone, and the two gentlemen retired arm in arm.

“But it’s only hearsay evidence,” the Glowworm objected.

“Common knowledge, *I* should call it,” said the African Lantern Fly. “Why *should* they say it, if it wasn’t so? They don’t say other insects’ heads are like a lamp.”

“Can you prove that?” said the Glowworm.

“Don’t ask me to prove a negative,” said the African Lantern Fly, sharply. “Of course they don’t say so, because they’re not, you see. But they say mine is like one, because it is—not because it isn’t. That’s common-sense”—which to both Jack and Maggie (and

of course to the other two Lantern Flies) seemed a good argument, but the Glowworm only shook its head, and looked unconvinced.

"That concludes the evidence," said the Great Lantern Fly, "and now the judges must sum up." And then they all sat silent, and looked at Jack and Maggie, who didn't quite know what they were expected to do.

"You're the judges, you know," said the Great Lantern Fly, at last.

"But what are we to do?" asked Jack.

"Sum up, of course," said the Great Lantern Fly, "that is to say, you must turn it all over in your mind, and weigh the evidence as to whether we are luminous or whether we're not."

"Out loud," said the Candle Fly.

"Certainly," said the Great Lantern Fly, "you must make a speech about it, and, for my part, I hope it will be a luminous one."

"Then do we decide?" asked Jack.

"Certainly not," the Great Lantern Fly answered. "The Glowworm does that. She's the jury, you know, and you must be careful not to influence her unduly."

"But mayn't I say what I think, then?" said Jack.

"It is your bounden duty to do so," said the Great Lantern Fly solemnly, "but you mustn't say that you think it. That would never do."

"It would be a hint to the jury," said the Candle Fly, "and hints are not right from a judge."

"On the other hand," continued the Great Lantern Fly, "you mustn't pretend that you don't think what you really do think, because that would be throwing dust in the jury's eyes."

"Which, as the jury's a lady, would be *most* rude," said the Candle Fly.

"Trust to your natural sense of politeness," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"And to common-sense," said the Candle Fly.

"And right principle," added the Great Lantern Fly.

"I'm sure I shall never remember all that," said Jack.

"Nothing like practice," said the Great Lantern Fly. "You'd better begin."

"I appeal," said the African Lantern Fly, getting up all of a sudden. "Two judges are irregular."

"You're irregular," said the Great Lantern Fly. "You should rise to order."

"So I do—also," said the African Lantern Fly.

"It was settled before you came," said the Candle Fly.

"That's what I complain of," said the African Lantern Fly, "I was not consulted."

"You shouldn't have been late," said the Great Lantern Fly, "but the matter can be adjusted. One judge must do the summing-up, and the other will have to concur."

"In that case I withdraw my objection," said the African Lantern Fly, sitting down again.

"Begin at once," said the Great Lantern Fly, looking at Jack, "and don't waste the time of the court."

"But which of us is to do it?" said Jack.

"Whichever of you likes," said the Great Lantern Fly, "and the quicker you decide, the better."

"Ladies first, *I* should say," said the Glowworm.

"Oh, I think it had better be you, Jack," said Maggie anxiously. "I'm sure *I* couldn't, and you know much more about insects."

"Very well, I will then," said Jack, standing up.

"Are you nervous?" asked the Great Lantern Fly suddenly. "If you are you needn't be, because it doesn't matter in the least."

"What doesn't matter?" asked Jack—he had not felt nervous before, but now he began to wonder if he didn't.

"Why, what you're going to say doesn't," the Great Lantern Fly explained, "because it won't alter things one bit. We are luminous whether you think we are or not, and if we weren't, we wouldn't be even if you thought we were. You can't alter it although you are the judge, though, as to that, it's all nonsense, really, because we're the best judges, of course."

"So it will make no difference," said the Candle Fly. "If it would, it would be perfectly proper to feel nervous, but as it won't, why, you needn't."

"It would be uncalled for," said the Great Lantern Fly.

"If it's all nonsense," said Jack, who felt rather hurt at this way of putting it, "and if it doesn't make any difference, then I don't see the use of saying anything."

"There isn't any," said the Great Lantern Fly, "but you'd better, because it's so usual. You're a legal fiction, you know—that's all."

"I'm not," said Jack—he felt most indignant, though he didn't quite know what was meant by this.

"Go on," said the Great Lantern Fly severely, "and don't waste the time of the court."

"You'll be annulled if you do," said the Candle Fly.

Though Jack didn't know what that meant either, yet it sounded so serious that he thought he would say what he could, and get it done with as soon as possible.

"It seems to me——" he began.

"That won't do at all," said the Great Lantern Fly,

"it's leading the jury. You may say, 'it seems,' if you like."

Jack tried to make up a sentence with an "it seems," without the "to me," in it, but it wouldn't go properly at all, so he thought he had better begin in some other way. "As far as I can make out," he began.

"Good gracious!" said the Great Lantern Fly, "whoever heard of a summing-up that opened in that way! It's not dignified. You should tell the jury what she's been hearing the witnesses say, and what it's for her to consider, and if anything struck you, you can say it must have struck her—and so on. Every now and then you may say, 'Now, madam,' and when you think she's of your opinion, you can stop and leave it to her. That's the proper way."

"And you should look at her, you know, because she's the jury," said the Candle Fly.

"And may read your expression," said the Great Lantern Fly "and——"

"I tell you what it is," said Jack, who was getting more and more impatient, "I'll either do it in my own way or I won't do it at all. So there!"

"In that case," said the Great Lantern Fly, as if he was deciding a difficult point of law, "you had better do it in your own way."

Everybody said "Hear, hear" to this, and then Jack began. "It seems to me," he said, "that if you Lantern Flies don't really shine—at least sometimes—it's rather funny that anybody who has ever really seen you, at night, should ever have thought that you did." (Here there were several "Bravos," and the Great Lantern Fly whispered to the two others that the jury was certainly being led, but, as it was in their favour, it didn't matter—in fact it was all for the

best.) “And as for their making mistakes,” Jack continued, “I don’t think that the French Lady, at any rate, could have made one, because she knew the Great Lantern Fly so well, and painted him in the same book where she said he did shine, so that if it wasn’t true she must have been telling a story, and I don’t believe she’d have done that.”

Here, all of a sudden, the French Lady popped into court again, just said, “*Mais vraiment!*” in a *very* vivacious manner, and popped out in the same way—like a flash.

“Go on,” said the Great Lantern Fly, “you see she agrees with you.”

“Then as for the other witnesses,” Jack went on, “it’s all very well for the En—the Ency—that great red book, I mean——”

“The Encyclopædia Britannica,” said the Great Lantern Fly.

“It’s all very well for it,” Jack continued, “to talk about other travellers who haven’t seen what she saw, but it says there are some who have seen it, too, and that the Indians told them what they told Madam Merriman.”

“*Merian*,” said the French Lady, popping in and out again, just as she had before.

“And I think,” Jack continued (he was not a bit surprised this time), “that if several people say that they have seen a thing, one ought to believe that they have, unless one *knows* that they’re story-tellers, and if ever so many more people say that they haven’t seen it, why, that only proves that *they* haven’t, and what does *that* come to, if other people have? And it’s all very well not to say who the people were who didn’t see the Lantern Flies shining, because that’s only not

seeing something, and they had nothing to describe—but when other people, besides Madam Merian, *have* seen them, I do think it's a shame not to say who *they* were, and what they say they saw, because that would be ever so much more important, and much more interesting too. It's like only hearing one witness, *I* think, and one ought to hear them all, of course. So I don't think it's fair at all, and, besides, in another place, the same book does say that the Lantern Flies are luminous."

There were so many "Bravos" here that Jack had to stop, but he was very glad to go on again, for he didn't feel a bit nervous, now, and was getting quite excited.

"So, even if it was only in South America," he continued, "*I* don't believe that all those people were making mistakes, and when it comes to Asia and Africa as well, then it *does* seem queer that just the same thing should have been said about the same insects in so many parts of the world, if it wasn't really true—because, if the American Indians and the Chinese and the black men in Africa had all been making mistakes, why shouldn't they have made the same ones about different insects?—and if they'd been telling stories, why shouldn't they have told the same stories about different insects—or about them, as well? And besides, I think it's a shame to say that so many people have been telling stories—and as for the Chinese making laws about an insect, for no reason, or making them about the wrong insect, *I* don't believe that, so I tell you."

The enthusiasm here was so great that Jack felt as if he was quite a fine orator, and the Glowworm, who thought he had meant her when he said, "so I tell you," made him a little curtsy, and said, "Thank you very much, sir"—it was quite evident that she was being led.

"As for the rest," he began again, at last, but there was still so much noise that he couldn't go on, till the Great Lantern Fly said: "Hush, hush pray—he's coming to the peroration," which had an immediate effect.

"As for the rest," Jack continued—he didn't in the least know what "the peroration," meant—"I think it *is* rather funny that you Lantern Flies so often don't shine, and if it *is* because you don't want to, then I wish you would want to, and I think you ought to, too, if you want people to believe that you are luminous, instead of thinking that you're not ; only *I* think that it's because you can't help it that you so often don't, and that you're only luminous sometimes, at night, and not always, as the Glowworm, here, is. And—and that's all."

There was no applause during this part of Jack's summing-up, except from the Glowworm, and as she had a soft voice, it didn't sound nearly so enthusiastic. When he had finished, he sat down by Maggie again, and then the Great Lantern Fly said that, on the whole, it had been a very good speech, only he had been disappointed in the peroration, and then he asked Maggie—who, as we know, was the other judge—whether she concurred.

"I think the same as he does, if that's what you mean," Maggie answered.

"It may be what I mean," said the Great Lantern Fly, "but what I have to say is 'Do you concur?' and unless you answer in the same way, it doesn't count, and there'll have to be a fresh trial directly."

"Oh, but I do concur," said Maggie, who thought that one trial was quite enough for one day.

"Very good," said the Great Lantern Fly, "then

the only thing left now is for the Glowworm to consider her verdict—there's no sentence, you know."

"Oh, I won't do that till the night comes," said the Glowworm, "because, at present, you see, I have no light to guide me."

"Why, you've had two judges," said the Candle Fly, "and you know what lights they are."

"Perhaps so," said the Glowworm, "but I intend to be guided by the light that is in me, and that's a night-light, you know."

"In that case," said the Great Lantern Fly, in a solemn tone of voice, and looking round him as though there were a great many people to look at, instead of only five—"in that case, we'll clear the court."

The last words were pronounced very sharply—in fact, quite peculiarly so—and, the instant afterwards, it seemed to Jack and Maggie as if a change was taking place.

CHAPTER XV

A FLYING VISIT TO MEXICO

FOR, instead of the three funny insects and the Glowworm, there was nobody now besides their two selves, and instead of the forests of South America, or the pagodas and rice-fields with Chinese working in them, or of the negro villages and palm-trees, there was nothing, or nothing very particular, and—which, perhaps had something to do with this—instead of being the daytime, it was night, and a very dark night, too, it seemed, just at present. Where they were now Jack and Maggie didn't know a bit, but there was no tree, and they seemed to be sitting just on the edge of something, and looking down into a deep place that was perfectly dark as well, so that they couldn't tell what was in it.

"I wish the Glowworm would come," said Jack, rubbing his eyes and yawning—it seemed to both of them as if they had been asleep—"it's night, now anyhow, although the place does seem to have changed."

"But, if we're not in court any more, perhaps she can't give her verdict," said Maggie; "and besides, where are the others, to hear it? I can't see them, and if they were here, and were luminous, we would. Oh, but what's that?" she exclaimed, for, all at once, in the deep dark place they were looking into—only it seemed a long way off—there was a faint gleam of beautiful golden-green light, and then another, just a very little nearer. "It's the Glowworm, I believe; she's coming back to give her verdict."

"But it seemed in the air," said Jack, "and went so quickly, and the Glowworm can't fly, you know—at least the female can't."

"Perhaps it's the male," said Maggie—"except that he's had nothing to do with it—and besides, she said that he didn't shine."

"It was the one in the picture said that, you know," said Jack, "and the male wasn't drawn shining there, so perhaps——"

"But *is* the male luminous?" asked Maggie.

"That's just what I can't make out," said Jack, "because one book says that it is, and another that it isn't, and sometimes one talks as if it wasn't, but without quite saying so—or else as if it was—and I don't believe the writers really know themselves, that's *my* explanation of it—only I wish they wouldn't pretend to. But what *I* say is this, who's ever seen fireflies in England?"

"Fireflies? Oh no," said Maggie, "there are no fireflies, of course. But then the Glowworm isn't a fly."

"Well," answered Jack, "and the firefly isn't one either, really, any more than the lantern or candle fly is. It's a beetle, and so is the glowworm, too, and if people in England were to see beetles flying about, at night, and shining, as they do in India, they'd call them fireflies too, I expect, and talk about them—or at any rate they'd talk about them—but nobody ever does, and so I don't believe——"

"Oh, look, Jack, there's one!" exclaimed Maggie excitedly, and there was the beautiful golden-green light again, only now it had come much nearer, and was ever so much more beautiful than it had been before. The light of the glowworm, Jack and Maggie both thought, was hardly anything to it, and, besides,

being stronger, it didn't seem to burn in the same way, for instead of keeping just the same, all the while, like one little lamp, it was sometimes brighter here and sometimes there, and sometimes here and there at the same time, as if it were not all one, and its colour was not always the same either, but sometimes looked quite golden, whilst at other times there was something almost pearly about it. When it grew suddenly brighter one would have said that it flashed, except that it was always so soft, however bright it was, that it seemed more to glow out than to flash out: it was very, very beautiful. As the lovely light came nearer, Jack and Maggie could see the leaves of trees—sometimes they were the long, drooping fronds of palm-trees—lit up by it, as if by a beautiful lantern, and then the lantern would go out for a little, as it passed behind their trunk's or branches, or flew where the foliage was thick; for now it was quite plain that they were looking down from the top of some high hill—so steep that it was almost like a precipice—into a wooded valley that lay far below—where it was they had no idea, but it was evident from the palm-trees that it was not in England, and even without them no one could have thought that such a wonderful, luminous insect as that was a glowworm, or even an ordinary firefly.

“I know what it is,” said Jack, all of a sudden, “it's the Great Lantern Fly coming back again to hear the verdict, and you see he *is* luminous.”

Maggie had no time to say whether she thought so too or not, for all at once there was such a glow of light that she was quite bewildered, and then, as it sank almost to nothing again, a voice which was not nearly so loud or important-sounding as the Great Lantern Fly's, though not quite so soft as the

Glowworm's, said quietly: "Yes, I *am* luminous, but I'm *not* the great lantern fly, and, perhaps, if I were, I shouldn't be."

"Isn't he luminous, then?" said Jack, who had thought just at first that he was in court again.

"All *I* know about it," said the new insect, who was a beetle evidently, but a very large one, "is that *I've* never seen him so."

"But have you often seen him?" Jack asked.

"Never," answered the Beetle, "or troubled about him either. A cucujo" (he pronounced it coocooho) "has no need to trouble his head about lantern flies, great or small."

"But how do you know about him then?" said Jack, "and what did you mean by saying that, perhaps, if you were he, you wouldn't be luminous?"

"Why, when I heard you talking about him, I presumed there was such a creature," the Beetle explained, "and what I meant was--and I mean it now too--that, compared with a cucujo, there are very few insects that *I* consider luminous—in fact, not any."

"Then I suppose Cucujo is your name?" said Jack.

"It is," said the Cucujo (for now we must call him that), "and I think it rather funny that, having seen me and the splendid appearance I was presenting, you should have begun to talk about lantern flies, instead of about cucujos."

Maggie couldn't help sympathising with this remark of the Cucujo's, and she thought she had better explain things. "You see," she began, "we were having a trial, and the thing to decide was whether the lantern flies really——"

"One lantern or three?" asked the Cucujo abruptly.



“ Prove it ! ” said the Cucujo excitedly

"There were three of them," said Maggie, not quite understanding, "and——"

"Prove it!" said the Cucujo excitedly. "Show me a fly or a beetle, or anything, that has three separate lanterns in different parts of him, and——"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Maggie. "I meant——"

"There were three Lantern Flies," Jack explained—"only one's called the Candle Fly—but they only have one lantern each, and the question is whether they can really light it, and——"

"And do you suppose," said the Cucujo indignantly, "that an insect like myself, who has three lanterns that he can light, is going to talk about another insect who has only one, which perhaps he can't? That would be extraordinary."

"But have you really three lanterns, Mr Cucujo?" said Jack. "I see two, which is very wonderful, but——"

"But the third is the most wonderful and beautiful of them all," said the Cucujo. "It's underneath me, you see, so that, in my present position, it would not be visible in its full effulgence, even if I did turn it up, and besides, up to the present, since you have no light at all, I have been purposely burning low, so as not to outshine you too much—it wouldn't seem kind, you know. However, if you won't mind, and as the difference is too marked to be disguised, if you really ask me to turn it up——"

"Oh do please turn it up, Mr Cucujo," said Jack and Maggie together, on which the Cucujo, who had begun to climb up the stem of a low plant, whilst he was speaking, evidently expecting the request to be made, flew off it suddenly, as he got to the top, with a whirr



“Oh do please turn up the light, Mr Cucujo,” said
Jack and Maggie together

like a rocket, and, as he did so, there was such a stream of beautiful golden light that it seemed as if a star that had fallen out of heaven was starting on his journey home again. But this little live star of a beetle didn't go back very far, but only flew in circles over Jack and Maggie's heads, and sometimes so close to them that he lighted them both up, as if with a revolving lamp. It was easy to see then that the light came from a luminous spot underneath the Cucujo's body, and almost in the middle of it, or rather that most of the light did, for his two upper lamps, one on each side of the thorax, were burning brightly, too, now, though they were not nearly so bright as the other one. Altogether, neither Jack nor Maggie had ever seen anything so beautiful, and when the Cucujo came down again and settled on a flower just in front of them, Maggie couldn't help telling him so.

"You flatter me," said the Cucujo, looking as pleased as people who are flattered generally do look, "because, you see, I'm only just a plain, brown beetle, without any particular markings or colours whatever—quite rusty-looking, in fact—very different from a rose-chaffer, a tiger-beetle, or hundreds of other kinds famed for their beauty—diamond-beetles some of them are called, I believe, and well they may be, for they sparkle like jewels. Why, there are beetles that have all the colours of the rainbow, almost, but, as for me, I've only got brown, which can hardly be called one at all. My shape, too, is not remarkable—just a plain oval—and though you may, perhaps, think me large" (and indeed he was an inch and a half long), "yet, compared to many, I am by no means remarkable even in that respect. In fact, if it were not for my three lamps" (here he turned them all up again—he had let them

down whilst talking in this way) "there would be no distinguishing feature about me, and I am sorry there is nothing more uncommon for them to light up."

"But *they* are so uncommon, you know," said Maggie.

"Do you really think so?" said the Cucujo. "Well, I am glad if there is *some* compensation. It would not be quite fair, you know, otherwise."

"I've never seen such lamps," said Maggie.

"Well, well," said the Cucujo, "they are efficient—that I grant. They throw out a fair light and never get out of order. I don't complain of them—'it's a bad workman,' you know—you've heard that. All I could wish is that *I* were more worthy of them, a poor, brown, rusty-looking beetle—but the lamps, as you say, are well enough."

"Oh, come, Mr Cucujo," said Jack, "you said, yourself, that there was no other beetle except you that had three lamps, and that, compared to you, other luminous insects could hardly be called luminous—and so it's no use pretending."

"Well, well," said the Cucujo, "it is *not*. Truth *is* truth, but one should be modest also, and the way I try to be is by pointing out that I am brown and rusty-looking, when the light I give out is admired. That is true, also, and the motive for drawing attention to it is, of course, a high one."

"But it's what one is, altogether, you know," Maggie began in an explanatory tone.

"Exactly," said the Cucujo, and then added, "I've another way of being modest, as well, which is to glide from the subject, when admired, in a way that's not noticed—gracefully, in fact. *That* can be had recourse to at the next convenient opportunity."

"Anyhow," said Jack (he wanted to settle the point,

and besides he didn't much care for this kind of conversation), "I suppose you're considered a very pretty insect," to which Maggie added, "Oh, a lovely one, I think—the loveliest of all, perhaps. Pretty isn't half strong enough."

The Cucujo looked down, for a moment or two, and then said, suddenly, instead of answering: "Do you know what country it is over there, that I came up from?—not what those lights are, I don't mean—that's not my question."

Jack and Maggie looked far out across the deep, dark valley over which the Cucujo had flown, and they thought they saw, far away—a very long way off indeed—a faint light, here and there, which, except that it *was* so faint, was very like that of the Cucujo itself. In fact, when they had looked for a little, they both felt sure that these lights were other cucujos, but as that had not been the question, Jack said nothing about them, but only answered that he didn't know what country it was.

"Well," said the Cucujo, "it's Mexico, and if it's not quite so dark there as it would be without those lights that you see in it—well, never mind that."

"But what lights *are* they?" asked Maggie (to make sure), for she was more interested in this than in knowing that the country was Mexico.

"Oh, if you really ask me," said the Cucujo, "and won't *let* me glide from the subject, as you know I tried to do—well, the fact is, they're me—that is, they're cucujos, and the Mexicans—the old Aztecs, you know, I don't mean the modern ones—are wearing us, to see by, which is a great compliment, of course."

"Do you mean to say they use you as lanterns?" said Jack.

"Certainly," said the Cucujo, "and they prefer us to any other ones. When they go out at night the men tie some of us to their ankles—which is what they've done now—and they even have dances, and do their featherwork by us, which perhaps you've heard of."

"I don't quite know," said Jack, "but if it's the *ancient* Mexicans you're talking about, that can't be now, you know, because the modern ones are now."

"Why, of course they are—too," said the Cucujo. "It would be shameful if *they* were excluded."

"But they can't both be together," said Jack.

"Why not, if they agree?" said the Cucujo. "You know, the closer they are the fewer words there are between them."

It seemed to Jack—and Maggie too—that the Cucujo was talking nonsense, and yet it was funny that it didn't sound quite such nonsense as it would have a little while ago. In fact, they were beginning to feel persuaded, but Jack was just able to say—though he almost felt, by this time, as if *he* were talking nonsense—"If something's happening now, and other things have happened a long time ago, then they can't both be happening—I mean they can't both have happened—or be happening either, I mean" (he was getting bewildered) "at the same time."

"Ah, well," said the Cucujo—he had looked very puzzled whilst listening to Jack—"it may be arranged like that where you come from, but here it's all different. It's quite wonderful, sometimes—or perhaps *you* might think it so—how things get mixed up with each other. As to whether they're past or present, that makes no difference, because, you see, there they all are, and often they're included in the

same period. You see, we're all brought out together, which, I suppose, explains it."

"Yes, I see, Mr Cucujo," said Jack, for somehow it seemed as if it was all quite natural now, and Maggie whispered to him: "It's funny how we keep on forgetting. It must be like that inside a book, of course."

"So there," the Cucujo continued, making a gleam with one of the two lamps on its thorax, that seemed to go right out to the lesser gleams far away, "are the ancient Aztecs tying me on to their ankles to see by when they made their journeys at night, or dancing and doing their featherwork by me, and there"—here the other lamp gleamed out—"are the modern Mexican ladies sewing me up in muslin bags and putting me in their hair, at *their* balls and parties, and keeping me in boxes under wire netting, and feeding me on sugar-cane, and so forth."

"Is that what you eat, Mr Cucujo?" asked Jack.

"Always, if I can get it," said the Cucujo, "and they give it me, I suppose, because they know how fond I am of it."

"And to keep you alive, so that they can use you when they go to their parties," said Jack.

"As you say," said the Cucujo, who, however, did not seem to have noticed what Jack had said, for he immediately added, "which is very kind of them. It would certainly seem," he went on—"though it is not for me to say why—as if I were something of a favourite."

"I suppose the Mexican ladies look very pretty with you making a light in their hair?" said Maggie.

"If they are pretty they do, of course," the Cucujo answered, "and if they're not (which is more frequent),

the light looks pretty at any rate; though, to tell you the truth," he continued, "it is seen to much better advantage under more natural conditions—as you have been seeing it."

"Is it really?" said Maggie rather doubtfully.

"Oh, it is," said the Cucujo, in a tone of conviction. "Forests and mountains, and the free night air, are better worth lighting than the Mexican ladies—whatever *they* may think, or the Mexican gentlemen either. Oh yes," he continued, "to light the night and each other, as we fly about in it together, that is worth all that they do with us."

"Then are you both luminous, Mr Cucujo?" asked Jack. "I mean, has the female lamps as well as you—because I suppose you're the male."

"If I were not I should not have allowed you to call me 'Mr Cucujo,'" the Cucujo answered. "Oh yes, we have both of us lamps, and what we like best of all is to light them for each other to look at. There is some poetry in that, but to sit all night shining in a lady's hair, however great a compliment it may be to one, is, after all, somewhat prosaic. In fact, to be perfectly candid, it bores me to death."

"Does it really, Mr Cucujo?" said Maggie, to whom it seemed rather poetical.

"You see," said the Cucujo apologetically, "one *has* to hear the conversation, there's no escaping from that—and there's no sugar-cane either then, when one might be eating it, or flying about—in fact, there is *only* the compliment, though, of course, it's a high one—I am fully aware of that."

"I should think it would look prettier to see people walking, with you on their feet, through the country, you know," said Jack.

"Dancing with a light in one's hair would be the prettiest, *I* think," said Maggie.

"That's because you're a girl, and like dancing," said Jack. "Going about, at night, with one's feet lighted up, would be ever so much jollier."

"If they had wings to tie us to," said the Cucujo, "it might be a little less dull for us then, though, to be sure, our own would be better. But they can't fly, you know, and oh, they do go so slowly. Now *I have* wings, and can fly, and if you would like to fly with me—I mean on my back, of course—we'll soon be in Mexico—or anywhere."

"Oh, that would be lovely," said Maggie, "but——"

"You needn't be nervous," said the Cucujo. "It *is* a dark night, certainly, but with a lamp on each side, and one underneath, there's no fear of losing the way."

"But sha'n't we fall off?" said Maggie.

"You may, if you like, of course," said the Cucujo, "but I wouldn't, if I were you. Now, then!"

"But I believe we shall," said Maggie. "You see, you're not quite so large as the Cicada, and your back's so smooth, and——"

"Ready?" said the Cucujo. "On my shards would be best, I think, when they open—one upon each. There's not much room anywhere else, and, besides, you'll get the best light there."

"But however are we to sit on them?" said Maggie—it seemed to her a most dangerous position.

"I leave that to you," said the Cucujo, "only you'd better hold tight, because my shards *are* slippery. And be careful, just at first, you know, because I go off like a rocket."

How it was ever managed neither Jack nor Maggie could tell, only it seemed to them as if they were



The firefly ride

obliged to do as the Cucujo suggested, and when he did go off like a rocket, there they were, each upon one of his shards (or wing-cases), but dreadfully afraid of slipping off, and only just able to keep on by clinging as tight as they could round the edges. Otherwise it was very pleasant and comfortable, for the night air was deliciously soft and cool, and, all the way, beautiful trees and ferns, and sometimes flowers, kept on appearing, as they were lit up in the beautiful, soft, golden light. They would grow out of the darkness, and then fade back into it again, as if two worlds were changing into one another. The speed at which the Cucujo went was so great that, in a very few minutes, they had got to the lights that had seemed so far away when they started, and were going round and round amongst them, and making one of them, themselves. Now, instead of being dark, there was a moon and bright stars overhead, and in the moonlight and starlight stood tall, stately trees, their leaves just whispering together, and when Jack and Maggie looked down, they saw the stars again, quivering in water, so that it seemed as if they were in some tropical forest, with a river, or lagoon, winding through it. But there were no more cucujo beetles, and still less were there any men or women to be seen—nothing to do with people or towns or cities, either ancient or modern. As for the lights, they were not like those of the Cucujo at all, but much smaller, and instead of keeping on burning all the while, as they had been doing, one would just flash for a moment, and then go quite out, and then flash again, as if each of them was a little revolving lighthouse. Whenever they came near enough for Jack and Maggie to see what it was that was making the light, it seemed to them to be a much smaller

insect than the Cucujo, though it looked like a beetle too, and what was still more curious was that the Cucujo seemed to have got smaller himself, as well, and *his* lamps were beginning to go out and then flash up again, like the others, and all at once, Jack cried out: "I know what it is. We've got amongst a cloud of fireflies, and I believe the Cucujo's three lamps have all turned into fireflies, too, and that we're riding on two of them, and not upon him any more."

CHAPTER XVI

JACK AND MAGGIE DROP OFF WITH THE CONVERSATION

"THAT'S it, of course," said a voice in answer to Jack, which was not very like the Cucujo's—it was so much more energetic—but which certainly came from where he had been just before. "You'd been speaking to *him* quite long enough, and *I* thought it was only fair that we should have a chance of saying something for *ourselves*. We are the real fireflies, you know, and ought not to be left out in the cold. Such treatment by no means suits our temperament, so we arranged it in that way."

"Of course we did," said the Firefly that Maggie was on, "and the wonder is, with our ardent natures, that we left it so long."

"We don't believe in being too patient, we fireflies don't," said Jack's Firefly.

"And the idea," added Maggie's, "was so simple that it ought to have presented itself sooner."

"But it's rather funny that the Cucujo's lamps should have turned into fireflies, isn't it?" said Jack.

"Funny! not at all," the Firefly answered. "You see it all happened in a flash. You've heard of things happening like that, I suppose."

"Oh yes, of course—some things," said Jack.

"Most things do with us," said the Firefly, "and this was one of them. You see it was at night."

"*That's* most important," said Jack's Firefly. "By day it would not have been possible."

"Wouldn't it?" said Jack.

"I speak as an expert," said the Firefly. "Nothing in that way is to be effected under daylight conditions."

"The flash system—which is ours—then fails," said Maggie's Firefly, "so, of course, we waited for the night."

"Which produced the requisite conjunction," said Jack's Firefly, "so, now we've explained it to you, we can pass on to something else. Perhaps one of you would like to say something poetical on the subject of riding us—a *fiery* steed, you know—you might make a point there. Pegasus—whom you may have heard of—was only winged, he was not *really* fiery. I confess I think you have the advantage. Well, if you *have* anything poetical to say, now's your opportunity."

"You're not likely to get a better one," said Maggie's Firefly, "so you can begin at once."

"That is, if either of you want to," said Jack's.

"That is understood, of course," said Maggie's Firefly. "It's of no value unless spontaneous. Well?"

It certainly did seem to Jack—and still more, perhaps, to Maggie—that it was a very fine thing to be riding on fireflies, at night, as they were doing, and feeling as easy and comfortable about it as if they were sitting in two arm-chairs, but whether it was that they were neither of them really poetical, or that being expected to be, interfered with it, anyhow all that Jack could say, after thinking a little, was: "Oh, I think it's very jolly, Mr Firefly," and even Maggie, though she was a little better, did not get further than "*I* think it's the loveliest thing in the world."

"What do you think of that?" said Jack's Firefly,

looking at Maggie's, who shook its head, and replied: "Not much—not very much, I'm afraid. It seemed to want fire."

"It did," said Jack's Firefly decisively, "*and* heat."

"Certainly," said Maggie's Firefly, "especially yours, you know" (by which it seemed that Jack was intended). "There was too little glow, too little scintillation about it."

"Too little!" exclaimed Jack's Firefly (who seemed much the severer critic). "Why, there wasn't any at all. The Promethean spark was wanting."

"Try and remember that another time," said Maggie's Firefly to Jack. "Then perhaps you may do better."

"But I don't know what it means," said Jack.

"Give him an illustration, my love," said Jack's Firefly—"that is, if you've patience. *I* haven't."

"Certainly, dear," said the other one (it was evident the Fireflies were a married pair, and that Maggie's was the lady); "*this*"—and here she flashed out very brightly indeed—"is the Promethean spark."

"But I can't do that, of course," said Jack.

"I'm afraid not," said the male Firefly. "It's hopeless."

"Oh, one mustn't despair," said the lady Firefly, "and mine, you know, was not quite so frigid. There was a little more promise in that direction, I think."

"Well, well," said her husband, and then he looked at Maggie a little less severely, and said: "You perhaps may do better."

"I'll try to," said Maggie, who felt complimented.

"That's right, that's right," said her Firefly encouragingly. "Something about riding through the tropic night, perhaps, next time."

"On steeds of living flame," suggested Jack's Firefly.

"Don't you think 'stars' would be bolder, dear," his wife asked, "as well as more like us?"

"You hear," said Jack's Firefly to Maggie. "Stars of the summer air. There's a hint for you."

"Give us fire, glow, sparkle, force, and originality," said Maggie's Firefly, "and we'll be satisfied, won't we, my dearest?"

"Certainly, my own," answered her own. "But perhaps, my love, she is not fitted for poetic utterance. There are dumb poets, you know."

"Of course, if she's one of that kind," said the lady Firefly, "and would rather look what she feels——"

"Then it's more simple," Jack's Firefly explained, as they flew round and round. "You've only got to pose, you know, and here are the limelights all ready."

As he said this he shot out a flash of green light, which was perfectly beautiful, and fell right upon Maggie, and, as it died down again, her own Firefly sent another up at her, and then, for a little while, they kept flashing at her, in turn, so that she felt almost dazzled.

"How's she doing it?" asked her Firefly of Jack's. "I can't see her so well as you can."

"She isn't doing it at all," Jack's Firefly answered, in a very disappointed tone of voice. "I never saw anything so wooden in my life."

"Not doing *what*?" said Maggie, half angrily—

she was beginning to get a little impatient, and didn't think the Firefly's last remark was very polite.

"Why, posing, of course," the Firefly answered. "It's no good without that, you know."

"Not even with *our* limelights," the lady Firefly added.

"Except in extreme cases," said the male Firefly, "and you're not an extreme case."

"Very far from it," the lady Firefly assented.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Maggie, "and I'm not going to do anything."

"Ah well, it's a pity," Jack's Firefly remarked. "It can never be done so effectively again, however much you may wish it in after years. But of course if the artistic temperament *is* wanting——"

"I wish you'd tell us something about yourselves, Mr and Mrs Firefly," said Jack, who had had enough about things that were not entomology. "That's what I'd like to know about."

"Certainly," said the Firefly he was on. "Why ever didn't you ask us before?"

"We've been waiting, you know," said Maggie's Firefly.

"And, perhaps, rather wondering that you didn't begin," added Jack's. "However, if you really wish to know about us, we are the genuine fireflies of Italy."

"Then are we in Italy now?" asked Jack, feeling rather surprised, for he had no idea that they had flown quite so far as that.

"To be sure," said the Firefly. "Why, where else should we be?"

"You might say that if we were still in Mexico," said Jack, who thought they must have been there, somehow, and got out of it again.

"Why, so I should," the Firefly answered. "It's a most convenient form of expression."

"Then it isn't quite 'the tropic night,'" Maggie ventured to observe.

"Not unless you've poetic feeling," said her Firefly. "It goes by that, of course."

"'Sub-tropic' would not sound half so convincing," said Jack's Firefly.

"It would be almost as bad as north temperate," said Maggie's. "You wouldn't call it that, I suppose?"

"Why not, if it was right?" said Jack.

"It would be impossible in poetry," the Firefly explained. "One must be true to art, you know."

"I think one ought to tell the truth," said Jack.

"Oh dear!" said the lady Firefly, in quite a despairing tone of voice, "how *are* we to approach one another?"

"There is only one way," said her husband (it seemed to Jack that as he and Maggie were actually riding the two Fireflies the way had been found), "*we* must descend to *their* level, since it is impossible for *them* to rise to ours. You want prose, do you?" (this was to Jack). "Well, you shall have it. Do you see that thing shining in the grass there?"

"Yes, I see it," said Jack, though he hadn't before.

"Well," said the Firefly, "it's a bottle, and a scientific gentleman has put it there for experimental purposes. That's prose."

"Oh," said Jack—he felt sure the Firefly had not finished, and wondered what was coming next.

"If you like," said the Firefly, in a slow, deliberate sort of way (as if he were trying to *make* himself speak, Jack thought), "we'll go and look at it."

"Very well," Jack answered, though he didn't feel very interested.

"Then away we go," said the Firefly, in the same funny manner, and then he added, in an undertone, to the lady Firefly (only Jack heard him), "We're getting on, my dear, aren't we?"

This was just as they started, and, in almost a second afterwards, they were all at the bottle, and then Jack and Maggie saw that there were several fireflies inside it, whilst quite a number of other ones were flying about it, and often dashing themselves against the glass.

"Now," said Jack's Firefly, "if you want to know about it you'd better listen, for I can't possibly repeat what I'm going to say—the ordeal would be too great. The ones in the bottle," he continued, "are females, and the ones that want to get into it, but can't, are males. There!"

"What makes them want to get into the bottle?" said Maggie, who thought that she would rather be outside it.

"Can you ask?" said the lady Firefly, in a very expressive tone of voice, and with the most vivid flash she had yet emitted—quite burning it seemed—"Oh, *can* you ask?"

"Hush, my love, hush," said her husband gently, "or you'll say something quite beyond them. I can tell from your manner that something poetical's coming. It is not prosaic at all."

"Prosaic! how can it be?" said the lady Firefly. "And how—oh, *how*" (this was with still greater feeling) "can *I* be?"

"The best way is to keep your eyes fixed on the bottle," her husband answered. "But leave it to me,

love, I shall not be longer than necessary—of *that* you may be quite sure.” And then he continued hurriedly (as if he wanted to get it over), “The flashes emitted by the females being visible through the transparent medium of the bottle, such males as may happen to be in the vicinity fly towards it, attracted by the luminous rays.”

“Oh, then the light’s just a signal?” said Maggie.

“It is,” said the lady Firefly impulsively, “and so was Hero’s.”

“There, there,” said the male Firefly soothingly, “let us keep to their level. *They* may not understand the allusion. And now, if you’ve any more questions,” he continued, speaking to Jack, “please make haste.”

“And release us,” said the lady Firefly, imploringly.

“Then I suppose you just flash them at each other?” said Jack.

“We do,” said the male Firefly.

“It is the end and object of our being,” said his lady love.

“But why should fireflies have been put into a bottle?” asked Maggie, who wished she was large enough to uncork it and let them out.

“It’s an experiment,” said the male Firefly, as if he was speaking of something very repugnant to his feelings.

“And the wretch who is making it,” said the lady Firefly—“that man who can thus coldly play with our feelings—may be here at any moment. Oh, let us fly!”

Her husband seemed quite as ready to, and, the next moment, they were flashing over fields, or through orchards or high trees, and sometimes over lakes or

streams, in a way that was quite bewildering. It was very nice, as it had been all the time, only Jack and Maggie couldn't help beginning to wonder how long it was going to last, and at last Jack felt obliged to say: "Please, Mr Firefly, how are we to get off you?"

"You must wait till the daytime," his Firefly answered, "and then it will be quite easy."

"And it's nearly that now," said Maggie's Firefly—indeed it seemed to be getting much lighter.

"But why will it be easier then?" asked Jack

"Oh because we go out then," his Firefly explained, "and then, of course, there'll be an end of us."

"When the light fails—ah yes," said the lady Firefly, "and I feel myself waning already."

"And when there's an end of us," the other continued, "of course you can't be on us."

"But where shall we be, then?" said Maggie, feeling rather uncomfortable.

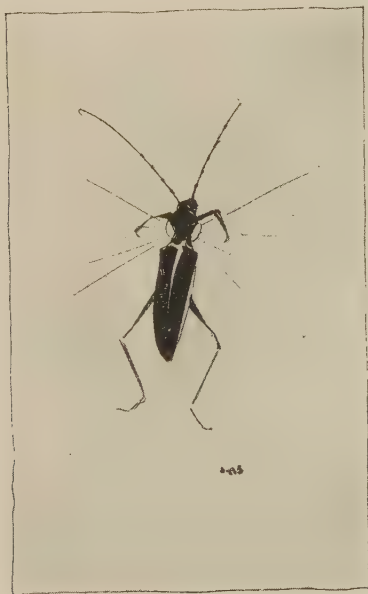
"Oh, anywhere," said Jack's Firefly. "That's as it may happen; but wherever we are, as it gets towards daytime we'll be less bright and vivacious, as we are even now, in fact—you must have observed it—and the conversation will begin to flag, and drop off, and—and then, of course, you'll drop off with it, as a natural consequence."

"Oh, please don't let us do that," said Maggie, in an alarmed tone of voice.

"We wouldn't, dear, if we could help it," her Firefly answered; "but when one goes out—as I feel that I'm doing at this moment—how is one to act?"

"Just at present we're over water, I think," said Jack's Firefly, with a very pale flash indeed, "and water's soft, you know."

"Oh, *do* go to shore! Oh, please do!" cried Maggie, in a fright. Then she gave a little scream, and, the next moment, both she and Jack were in the water. The Fireflies had gone out.



CHAPTER XVII

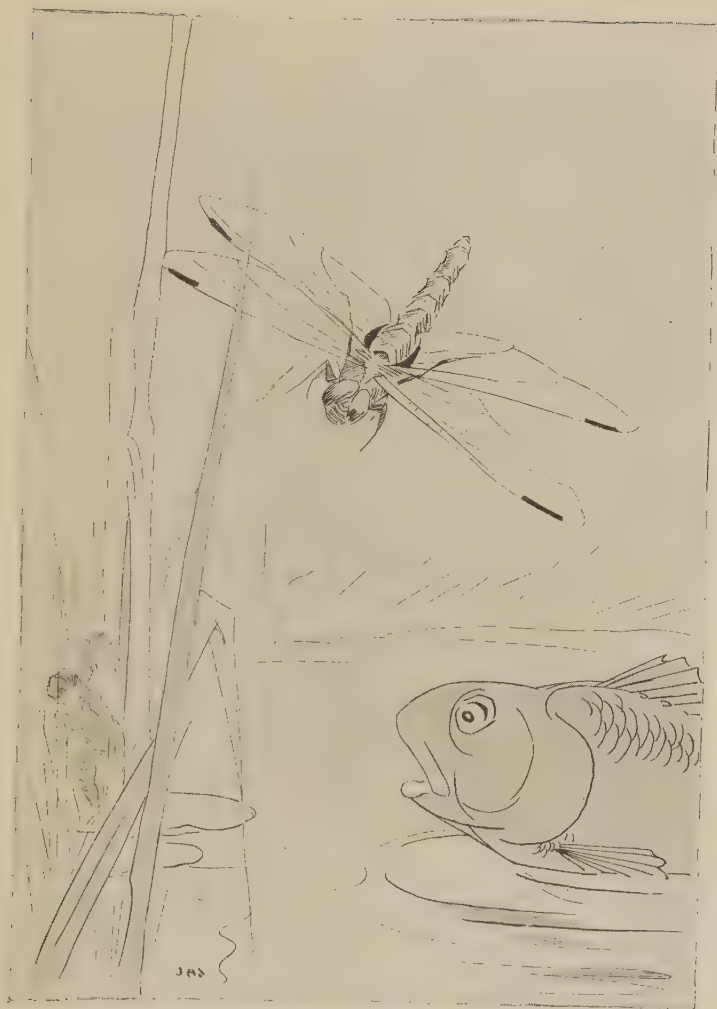
A VISIT TO DIVING-BELL HALL

ALTHOUGH Jack and Maggie were so small and light now, yet they fell quickly enough through the air into the water, and it was lucky that they did, too, for, half way down, a terrible monster like a flying dragon, but which they both recognised as a dragon-fly, made a sudden swoop at them, and almost caught them, or, at least, one of them ; but he was just too late, and, the next moment, they had gone in, with a splash. There is nothing that reconciles one so much to falling into the water as knowing that, in this way, one has escaped being eaten by a dragon-fly (or anything), and so, though neither Jack nor Maggie considered it a nice change from firefly-riding, yet they didn't complain, but even thought themselves lucky.

But they were not quite safe yet, even if there had been no danger of drowning, for, all at once, Jack noticed an enormous fish—as big as a shark, it looked to him now, though in all other respects it was like a perch—swimming towards them. The only thing to do was to get amongst the stalks of some water-lilies and other aquatic plants that were quite near, but as the fish kept swimming round them, and the dragon-fly was still hovering about overhead, they felt very embarrassed, and afraid either to stay in the water or to put their heads above it.

“And yet we must do that,” said Jack, “or we'll have to drown.”

“I'd rather drown,” said Maggie (though she kept



Jack noticed an enormous fish

her head up), "than be swallowed by a fish or a dragon-fly."

"I think I would too," said Jack (with *his* head up), "and besides, they *say* drowning's a pleasant death."

"I'm sure it isn't pleasant to hold one's head in a basin of water," said Maggie, "and it ought to be the same."

"If only we could get to land again," said Jack, "we'd be all right, because I think this is England."

Maggie couldn't feel at all sure that it was England in the position they were in ("Not that it makes much difference," she thought, "as long as we're in the book too"), and she asked Jack why he thought so. "It ought to be Italy," she added, "as the Fireflies were there; only that doesn't prove it now, of course."

"I think it's England," Jack explained, "because of the fish and the dragon-fly. I know the dragon-fly, it's the great brown river one, and the fish is a perch."

"I wish he'd go away," said Maggie; "he's the most dangerous, now, of the two. Oh, Jack, he's coming nearer."

"He would go away if he knew who we were," said Jack, "at least I dare say he would. He's mistaken us for worms, I suppose."

Maggie was just going to say that it was very disagreeable to be mistaken for worms, when the perch made a sudden shoot forwards amongst the water-lilies, which brought him very near to where they were, and then kept looking about him in such a very disagreeable, alert sort of way, that neither she nor Jack dared either to move or to say a word more for some time. In fact, they were frightened almost out of their wits, and when the perch moved again—luckily, this time, it was away from them—they both climbed up the stalk to which

they had been clinging, and then gave a jump from that to a convenient fork in the next one.

"Well!" said a voice, which sounded just underneath them, "*some* people can be clumsy, it seems."

Jack and Maggie looked down quite quickly, but all they could see was a little silver globule going down very fast in the water, and which was soon lost amongst the lily stems. They were a good deal surprised, but as they had the perch to think about—for he was still not very far off—they soon gave up guessing what the silver globule was, and began to think what they were to do, to get to shore again.

"It'll be very difficult," Jack said, "because it seems to be quite a wide river, or pond, or something, and if we try swimming we're sure to be eaten by some fish or other, as we're so small; so, if we can't get some insect or other, to take us over——"

"Why, good gracious me, they're not gone yet!" said the same voice that Jack and Maggie had heard before, and when they looked down again—for it came from just the same place—there was the same silver globule, or bubble, or whatever it was, disappearing in the same way.

This time they were more interested, and as they both felt sure that they had heard the voice, and that it had something to do with what they had seen, they thought that they would watch for the silver globule to come up again. "Because it must have gone down, and come back, before," said Jack. "It can't really be what it seems to be, but something else."

"It looks like an air-bubble," said Maggie, "and I don't see what else it can be."

"But air-bubbles can't talk, you know," said Jack.

"Can they not?" said the same voice again.

"Judging by some of the conversations *I've* heard, *I* should say they could."

Jack and Maggie were taken just as much by surprise this time as they had been before, although they were both on the look-out. The voice seemed behind them now, so, as they could see no bubble going down in the water, they each began to peep, in opposite ways, round the stalk of the lily they were holding to, and there, just on the part of it that neither of them had been able to see, and with only half of its body above the water, sat, or rather clung, like themselves, a good-sized spider, who nodded at them in quite a friendly manner (so that they didn't feel so frightened as otherwise they would have done), and then went on talking from where she had just left off.

"Can't talk, can't they?" said the Spider, as she came round the stalk to where Jack and Maggie were. "Well, perhaps not, but if you'd sat on a water-lily leaf, as I have, of an evening, and listened to the gnats and the midges, and the may-flies, more particularly, as they go whirling about in the season—the fashionable throng, as I call it—you'd have said that air-bubbles *were* talking. So there!"

"Really, madam?" said Maggie.

"Yes, really," said the Spider, "and I can tell you this, that *my* air-bubbles that I take down with me have quite as much that's solid in them, to say the very least of it."

"Really, madam?" said Maggie again, for she could think of nothing better to say.

"You may take my word for it," said the Spider—"that is, if you care to. Only they're useful, and the others are not; that's the difference, and there's no

other. I give you my opinion, and I should be a judge by now."

"Of air-bubbles, madam?" said Maggie.

"Of both," said the Spider emphatically, "by which I mean of both kinds. And then there are the whirligigs—oh dear!—when I think of *their* conversational powers—yes, air-bubbles indeed!"

"Then was it you that we saw when it looked like an air-bubble?" said Maggie.

"Good gracious me, no, child," said the Spider, "why, that was my air-bubble, to be sure. I was carrying it down."

"But I didn't see you with it," said Maggie.

"Why, I suppose I had got down too far," the Spider explained; "but you saw my bubble—which, however, when I carry it, may be considered a part of me—because it's so bright and silvery. I never let it get dull, you know."

"But I don't suppose it could," said Maggie.

"What it could or might do there's no saying," said the Spider, "only I take care it sha'n't. To keep things clean and bright is my idea, and I never let my bubbles get dull. Oh, dear me, no, that would never do."

"Then are you a water-spider, Mrs Spider?" asked Jack.

"I could never feel properly clean if I were not," the Spider answered hastily—"never! But you mustn't call me 'Mrs,' you know, because I'm a spinster. I thought you were aware of that."

"Spinner, don't you mean?" said Maggie. "All spiders are spinners, of course."

"Spinster is the older form," said the Spider, "and I prefer it, because, to tell you a secret, I'm just a wee bit old-fashioned myself. A spinster, my dear, that's

what I am and that's what I mean to be. So now I've told you, and there's no more mystery."

"Thank you, madam," said Maggie, not at all knowing what the mystery had been.

"'Madam' is respectful, but hardly correct," said the Spider. "It's not exact enough. You should call me 'Miss,' as I'm a spinster."

"But you don't spin in the water, do you, Miss Spider?" asked Jack.

"*Water-Spider*, if you please," said the Spider. "I must have the first part, which proclaims my *first* characteristic. 'Water' first, one can be a spider afterwards, as I very often say."

"Miss Water-Spider, then," said Jack.

"That's right, but don't slur it," said the Water-Spider. "Give each part its true value. 'Spider,' by itself, is a quite common name, but 'Water' makes it far otherwise. Miss Water-Spider, at your service."

Jack said the name again in the right way, and now that it was settled, he thought he would repeat his question, as it had not yet been answered. "But surely you can't spin in the water, Miss Water-Spider?" he said.

"I do, and I'll tell you why I do," said the Water-Spider, with a severe emphasis on the "why." "It's because it's the only clean way. Washing one's house is all very well in its way, but the fact is, it is impossible to wash it sufficiently. So I spin mine *in* the water, and nothing else would satisfy me."

"Do you really, Miss Water-Spider?" said Maggie.

"I should be very much ashamed of myself if I did not," the Water-Spider answered. "To have a really clean house is my idea of being a civilised being. And then it's so very much more comfortable."

"We shouldn't think so," said Maggie.

"That's because you've not thought it out," said the Water-Spider. "To be clean one must first know what true cleanliness is. I'm afraid you don't, my dear."

"I'm sure our house is cleaned often enough," said Maggie, not particularly liking this remark.

"Tell me one thing," said the Water-Spider earnestly. "Is there *any* time there between washing and washing?"

"Why, of course there must be some," Maggie answered, "or else——"

"Then that's a dirty house," said the Water-Spider, decisively. "Oh, don't tell me!"

"But surely——" began Maggie.

"My argument is this," said the Water-Spider: "If you don't clean a house the instant after it *is* clean, then it's dirty again, because, you see, dirt accumulates in the interval, and as for feeling comfortable whilst dirt is accumulating—well, how can one?"

"But there wouldn't be much in a short time," said Maggie.

"The question with me, I confess," said the Water-Spider, "would be—is there any? If there is, I can't live with it. Others, perhaps, may be able to, but, to one really sensitive on the subject washings without intervals are an imperative necessity; so, in order to make perfectly sure, the best, in fact the only way, is to begin the next whilst the last is still going on. Washings, in my opinion, should overlap, to meet which necessity I live in the water—and am clean."

"But we can't all do that," said Maggie.

"Then we can't all be clean, my dear," said the Water-Spider—an answer which seemed entirely to satisfy her, but didn't at all satisfy Maggie.

"But what is one to do?" she said at last.

"Perhaps something still more efficient may be found out in time," said the Water-Spider. "Meanwhile you may recommend my plan to the most cleanly persons you know. If adopted it cannot but promote their own comfort and that of all about them. Well, and whatever are you doing here?"

This seemed a good opportunity of asking for assistance, so Maggie answered, "Please, Miss Water-Spider, we've fallen into the water, and oh, if you *could* help us to get out again!"

"Fallen into the water, child!" said the Water-Spider, in astonishment, "why, whatever did you do that for? Though I daresay it's done you both good," she added, looking at them with a critical eye.

"It wasn't us so much," said Maggie, "I mean it wasn't our fault," and then she explained how they had been riding on fireflies, and how the fireflies had gone out as they were flying over the water with them, and let them fall into it, and how a dragon-fly had almost caught them in the air, and how a perch was waiting near, to eat them, now, and, in fact, all about it.

"Why, goodness gracious me, child!" said the Water-Spider, when she had listened to it all, "this comes of trusting to fireflies and such flashy people. Why, it is an adventure! Well, and what are you going to do now?" she continued, after sitting and thinking a little.

"We don't know," said Jack, who, like Maggie, had expected the Spider to propose something, and felt very disappointed that she hadn't. "You see, if we try to swim to shore the perch may eat us."

"*May!*" said the Water-Spider. "Why, my dear,

he's sure to—that's my belief. And he'd eat me, too, if I were to go with you. Oh, there's no trusting *him*."

"But I don't know any other way to get there," said Jack.

"Dear me! why, and I don't either," said the Water-Spider, who seemed to get brisker and cheerier in her manner as Jack and Maggie became more and more depressed. "Why, I really do believe there isn't any."

"But we can't stay here, you know," said Jack.

"If you do you'll catch colds, both of you," said the Water-Spider—"bad ones too, *I* should say."

"But what are we to do then?" said Jack.

"Why, that's the very gist of the question, isn't it?" said the Water-Spider. "When we've settled *that*, the rest's easy."

"But how are we to settle it?" said Maggie.

The Water-Spider said nothing for a minute or two, and seemed to be considering. "You see, if you *could* fly," she said at last, "it would be all well and good, if nothing happened."

"*If* we could," said Maggie.

"Exactly," said the Water-Spider. "Or if someone could fly over with you that would be the next best—but the question is, who? The midge wouldn't do, because he isn't large enough, and the may-fly is *so* irresponsible. Besides, it's too late for her now, and nobody else ever comes here."

"Oh dear," said Maggie.

"Come, we won't be down-hearted," said the Water-Spider, quite gaily. "There *is* the dragon-fly," she added, after a pause. "He could, of course, if he cared to."

"Oh no"—"Oh, but he wouldn't," cried Jack and Maggie, quite horrified. "He'd eat us."

"Oh, he might—that he might," said the Water-Spider. "It would be just like him—and besides, he mayn't come."

"I hope he won't," said Maggie. "He'd eat us, I'm sure."

"Not if he wasn't hungry," said the Water-Spider; "but as to that, the question is if he ever is *not* hungry. Perhaps we'd better settle that first."

"I don't see how we're to settle it," said Maggie, "and it isn't worth while trying, either, because I know we'll never get across in that way."

"I wouldn't say that," said the Water-Spider. "The scheme, my dear, is full of possibilities—for instance, if he *did* happen to come, and if he ever *isn't* hungry, then, if he were *not* hungry *when* he came, he *mightn't* eat you, and, in that case, he *might* take you over. So, if you like, we'll wait and try—or we might even make him a signal, as he's coming this way, unless you think it's too risky."

Somehow that was just what Jack and Maggie did think, and they both said so together, in a very decided way.

"Oh, very well, then," said the Water-Spider, "if you're both agreed and have really made up your minds——"

"Oh yes"—"Oh, we have, please," said Jack and Maggie, both together again.

"In that case," said the Water-Spider, as she got ready for another dive, "there's no need for me to say good-bye yet awhile. I shall find you here, probably, on my return journey, and it won't be delayed long, I promise you."

"But what *are* we to do?" said Jack; and Maggie, seeing the spider getting ready to leave them, began to cry.

"Don't do *that*, anyhow," said the Water-Spider quite sharply. "I'm old-fashioned, as I told you, and don't like it. Besides, it does no good at all."

"But nothing else does either," sobbed Maggie.

"That's just what I complain of," said the Water-Spider (just as if it were she, and not Jack and Maggie, who had cause to complain). "When there are twenty things and more that would be quite as useful, and look very much better, why choose crying?"

"I didn't choose it. I can't help it," said Maggie.

"Now that makes two things that you may be doing whilst I'm away," said the Water-Spider. "First, try to help it, and then, when you have, dry your eyes. You won't be so wet then, and then you'll feel better about it. Oh, you mustn't despair, child—that would never do."

With that the Water-Spider pushed off from her stalk again, but, instead of going down directly, she began swimming about on her back, in such a funny way that Jack, at any rate (for Maggie had enough to do now without that), was interested and couldn't help watching her. "Oh, Miss Water-Spider," he said, "whatever are you doing?"

"Why, making my bubble, of course," said the Water-Spider, and then Jack saw that tiny little air-bubbles were beginning to show themselves along some hairs which she had upon the under part of her body (which, of course, was uppermost now). It seemed as though she was picking them up in the water, and, all at once, they all seemed to come together, and there was the big silver globule that

they had seen before, only looking still more beautiful and curious now, because it was nearer, and he saw it quite plainly.

"There!" said the Water-Spider, "now it's done. That's as pretty an air-bubble as ever you saw, I think, though it's not one bit prettier than any I've ever taken down with me."

"But what are they for?" asked Jack, "and where do you take them down to?"

"Why, they're to breathe with, to be sure," said the Water-Spider, "and I take them down to my—oh," she cried, all of a sudden, "why didn't I think of it before? Why, you must come into my diving-bell, of course—there's room for you both, and you'll be clean by the time you get into it, even if you're not now, because we wash all the way there."

"Wash!" cried Maggie, who thought she was quite clean enough.

"Certainly," replied the Water-Spider. "It's the only effective means," she added, "that I have been able to discover for not bringing dirt into the house."

"Do you mean your house under water, Miss Water-Spider?" said Jack.

"To be sure," said the Water-Spider, "only I call it my diving-bell because it's made on that principle. It might have occurred to me sooner, only, you see, I forgot that you'd *have* to wash, and there's been an interval now since your last. *Some* dirt, you know, must have accumulated. I hope you won't think me inhospitable, but cleanliness comes first, of course."

"But how are we to get there?" said Jack rather doubtfully.

"Oh, that'll be easy," said the Water-Spider; "you've

only to take hold of a leg apiece—one on each side, you know—and down we'll go in a twinkling."

"But——" said Jack.

"Oh, not at all," said the Water-Spider; "it won't inconvenience me in the least. Only first," she continued, "I'll take down my bubble by myself, for it might get broken with you there, and then it would be wasted—and if there's one thing I *do* dislike it's waste of good air."

Down she went with her bubble, and whilst she was gone Jack and Maggie kept wondering what they ought to do, and feeling rather uncomfortable about it. To go down under the water seemed almost worse than to stay where they were, and though they understood, now, that the Spider was taking air down to breathe with, yet somehow they wanted confidence.

"Well," said the Water-Spider, as she came up by the stalk again, "I suppose you've been very impatient, but now we'll start. Catch hold of my two middle legs, and try not to get more in the way of my hind ones than you can help, because it's those that I swim with. However, if there is any difficulty we can help ourselves down with the stalk, and we'll soon come to my diving-bell, because it's spun up against it. Come, no dawdling. Are you ready?"

"But, please, won't we be drowned?" said Maggie.

"What, in a diving-bell?" said the Water-Spider. "People are often drowned when they go in boats, or ships, or steamers, but, did you ever hear of anybody being drowned in a diving-bell?"

"No, I don't think I have," said Maggie.

"Think indeed!" said the Water-Spider. "Why, the severest storms that rage around our coasts are never accompanied by any such fatality."

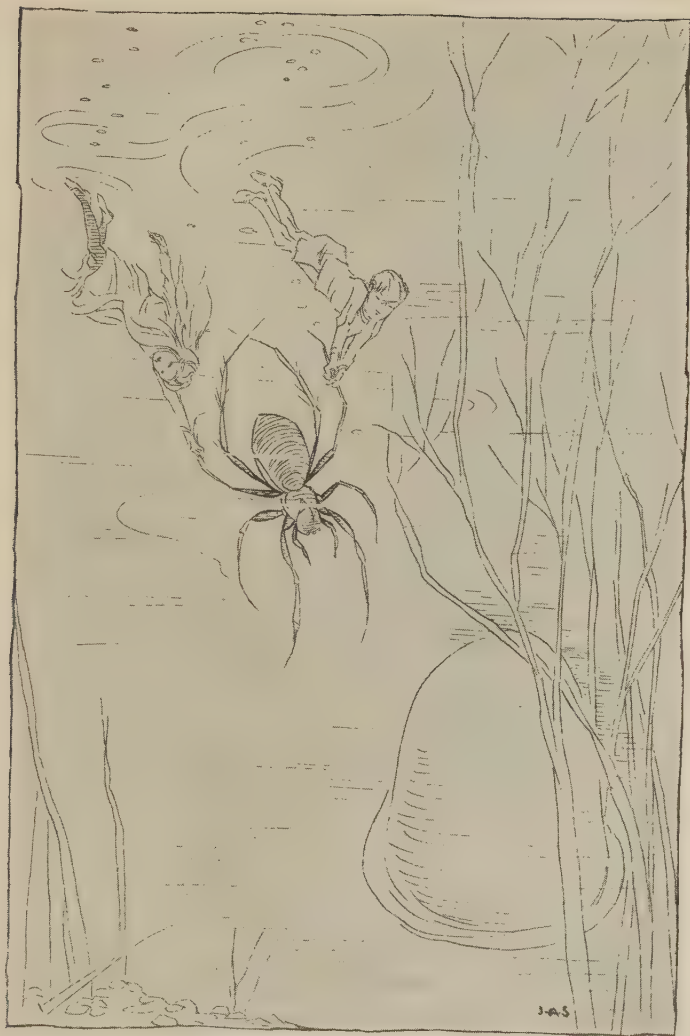
"But," objected Jack, "I didn't know one ever went to sea in——"

"Oh, gracious goodness me!" said the Water-Spider impatiently, "if you wait any longer I sha'n't know *what* to think of you."

There was something in the way in which the Water-Spider said this that Jack didn't at all like, so, instead of answering, he just said, "Come along, Maggie," and caught hold of one of her long middle legs, on the side nearest him. Maggie, who didn't want to be left behind, caught hold of the other, and the next moment they were all under water.

The Spider went down with them quite easily, and, before they had time to feel as if they were drowning, there was a little bob up, and there they were, in one of the snuggest and cosiest little rooms that they had ever been in, and breathing as comfortably as if it had been their own nursery. It is true that the floor of this room was all water, and there were no seats round the sides, as there are in an ordinary diving-bell that one pays to go down in; but then the walls, as well as the roof, were spun out of the finest gossamer, which was yet as strong as could be, so that when they began to climb up them, as the Spider told them to, they found it quite easy, and when she said "Pray sit down" there they were, sitting in two little pretty soft alcoves, which they had made in the web itself, simply by leaning against it, and which were nearly the shape of their own bodies, neither too large nor too small. And what was funniest of all, perhaps, though it didn't occur to either of them at the time, they were not wet any more now, but quite dry and comfortable.

"Well," said the Water-Spider, when they were all three settled, "so I've brought you quite safely, as I knew



The next moment they were all under water

that I should do. And now you are here, what do you think of it? Were you ever inside a more comfortable diving-bell?"

Jack and Maggie both said they never had been, which was quite true, as they had never been in a diving-bell at all, but had only read about them. "But I think it's your house, Miss Water-Spider," said Jack, "and not a real diving-bell, because that has to be let down, you know, and then goes up again. But this one can't, because it's spun to the lily-stalk; and besides, you live in it, so I think it's your house."

"Why, I told you it was," said the Water-Spider, "but it's my diving-bell too, for all that. Things would have come to a pass if I couldn't give my own house a name. Everybody does that, you know, so I call mine 'Diving-Bell Hall.'"

"Oh, I see," said Jack.

"And besides, it is a diving-bell," continued the Water-Spider, "because, firstly, it's full of air, and secondly it's under the water—so always remember that I'm Miss Water-Spider of Diving-Bell Hall."

"And do you sleep here, Miss Water-Spider?" asked Maggie.

"To be sure I do, child," said the Water-Spider, "just up here where I am" (she was in the roof, or dome, of the parlour, with her legs on each side of it). "That's my bed, and though you may think it a damp situation, yet it's well aired. I am careful about that."

"Are you, Miss Water-Spider?" said Maggie.

"Oh, most particular," answered the Water-Spider. "I should not be doing my duty to myself, or society, were I not. So I do it, of course, and never sleep in anything but a quite well-aired bed."

"You mean because the room's full of air, don't you, Miss Water-Spider?" said Jack.

"If that is, the bed must be too," said the Water-Spider, "because, you see, it's part of it. So I sleep in full security."

"It does seem curious to live in a house and sleep in a bed under water," said Maggie.

"Of course it's clever, if that's what you mean," said the Water-Spider, "and, what is far more, it is cleanly. In that particular, at any rate, the Water-Spiders may claim to come before all others of the family."

"Oh yes, Miss Water-Spider," said Maggie.

"So much for cleanliness," said the Water-Spider. "As for brains, well, it's clever, of course—very clever, as the whole world admits—to spin a house, as all spiders do. Whether it is cleverer to spin a house under water, and then fill it with air, so as to be able to breathe in it—thus making permanent house-cleaning possible—well I leave it to you, my dears."

Jack and Maggie both said they thought it was cleverer (because they really did think so) and the Water-Spider, though she only nodded without speaking, looked as if she thoroughly agreed with them. She nodded, indeed, in a very significant manner.

"I suppose the bubbles must burst when you bring them in?" said Jack.

"Oh yes, child," said the Water-Spider. "If they didn't I should be in a nice quandary, but I'm pretty firm with them, and have never had a refusal."

"Oh no, Miss Water-Spider," said Jack, though he thought it a funny way of talking.

"Nothing like firmness," said the Water-Spider, "combined with a little tact. Perhaps, now you're here, you'd like to see them burst."

"Oh yes, please, Miss Water-Spider," said Jack and Maggie.

"Well then you shall," said the Water-Spider, and in a moment she had run down the side of her little house-diving-bell, and gone up, through the water. In a very little while she was down again, and both Jack and Maggie thought they had never seen anything so pretty, in its way, as when she came up through the floor of her house (that is, through the water which made the floor) with a beautiful, bright, silver bubble all round her, so that the whole of her body, below the thorax, was inside it—a thing which they had not noticed properly before. As soon as she was in her parlour, she gave herself a little shake, and the bubble was gone, but it seemed to Jack and Maggie as though someone had opened a window and let in a little fresh air. "Now another," said the Spider, and she was up again, and down again still quicker than before, and then it was, "Just one more," and there was a third silver globule, with the window open again. "There!" she said, "not the smallest difficulty. Oh, it's wonderful what tact can do! Now we shall be much more comfortable."

"It does seem funny to be breathing the bubbles," said Jack.

"If you know of any others that give pleasure and satisfaction after they've burst," said the Water-Spider, "well, it would interest me to hear of them. There may be brighter ones—of that I say nothing—and some may last a little bit longer, but when they burst it's different."

"Is it, Miss Water-Spider?" said Maggie.

"Quite another story, I assure you," said the Water-Spider. "To have bubbles that burst, and yet continue to add to the comfort of existence, is quite a rare thing."

"Do you spin a web, as well as a house, under water, Miss Water-Spider?" asked Jack, who knew all he wanted to, now, about the bubbles.

"Why, my web *is* my house," said the Water-Spider, "and so it is with all of us."

"But I mean, do you have one to catch flies in, and—and that sort of thing?" said Jack.

"As for flies," said the Water-Spider, "there are none down here. Even the water-flies only live at the top, and so I don't much trouble about them. No, I do not make a web of that sort. The fact is, I am too accomplished a fisherwoman to need a net. I prefer to catch things myself, and bring them home with me."

"And do you catch fish, Miss Water-Spider?" asked Jack—"I mean quite little ones," he explained.

"Sometimes, perhaps, I may," said the Water-Spider (not very confidently, however), "but they are not my usual taste. As a rule they are too scaly for me"—she didn't say they were too quick, but Jack couldn't help thinking that this was what she really meant.

"I spoke metaphorically," the Water-Spider continued. "What I really like is a nice little water-caterpillar, as I may call it—an aquatic larva would perhaps be the more correct term—something belonging to the *isopods*, or *malostromacha*, as they *will* call them—and so on, which perhaps you are acquainted with."

"I'm afraid *I'm* not, at any rate," said Maggie, who had never heard such names.

"Ah, well," said the Water-Spider, "*I am*, and that's the most important, you know."

"And do they ever come into your house and get caught, Miss Water-Spider?" said Jack, and somehow, as he asked this simple question, a new sort of feeling seemed to come over him.

"Oh, I don't wait for that," said the Water-Spider, "at least not if I'm hungry. There's generally one of them not far off, and when I see him I just pop out and catch him where he is, and pop back again with him—that's the way, my dear. But, of course, when they *do* come in they're most truly welcome."

As the Water-Spider said this, she looked at Jack and Maggie, as they both thought, in a rather funny way, and added somewhat significantly, "*You're* welcome too, you know."

"Tha-ank you," said Jack—but not in such a cheerful tone of voice as he had been speaking in.

"Everybody's welcome to my house," the Water-Spider continued, "especially when I'm hungry—which is usually."

By this time both Jack and Maggie were beginning to feel as if they were cold and wet again, and Jack, who thought it best to change the conversation, was only just able to say: "Please, Miss Water-Spider, are there any other kinds of water-spiders besides you?"

"Why, that reminds me," said the Water-Spider, quite in her old way again, "there's a relation of mine, in a poor way—a poor relation, in fact, I *might* call her—who could perhaps be of service to you. She plies a raft, and no doubt if *I* were to ask her——"

"Oh, *would* she take us across, Miss Water-Spider?" said Jack breathlessly—as for Maggie, she could only look what she felt.

"Well," said the Water-Spider, "as I say, if *I* asked her I think she would. She's rather inferior, you know, and has no idea of making a house under water and filling it with air, in that very ingenious way. In fact, she knows nothing of air-bubbles, and can't even dive—good enough in her way, to be sure, but that's

not much, and she'll never do more. So she looks up to me, as is but natural."

"Oh, if you *would* ask her, please——" said Maggie.

"There's the water-boatman, too, now I come to think of it," said the Water-Spider, "but he's not so reliable. He rows well, it's true, but you can't keep him to the surface—he pops down every minute. Still, if you'd prefer a boat to a raft—it's more the thing, of course."

"Oh, we'd much rather go on the raft, Miss Water-Spider," said Maggie.

"Then the sooner the better, *I* should say," said the Water-Spider, "because in about two minutes I shall be feeling hungry again, and when I *have* a feeling like that I generally carry it out to its logical conclusion. Still, if you'd prefer to wait another five minutes or so——"

"Oh no, please, Miss Water-Spider," cried Jack and Maggie in a breath.

"Then come along, my dears," said the Water-Spider, and, almost in a second, as it seemed, they were all up again where they had been before.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RAFT-SPIDER DOES HER VERY BEST

AND there was the poor relation, with her raft, quite close, on the water, almost as if she had been waiting for them.

"Oh, you're there, are you?" said the Water-Spider, in a very off-hand way. "I was going to beg the favour of your services. It's as well to be polite in one's phraseology," she added, aside, to Jack and Maggie, who agreed with her, of course, but couldn't help thinking that when polite things have to be said it would be as well to say them in a polite way, too.

This, however, did not seem to occur to the Raft-Spider, who looked very pleased, and said, "Anything I can do to oblige you, miss—but *my* powers are so limited."

"Oh, please don't say that," said the Water-Spider, in just the same tone, "you are *very* skilful in the management of a raft—which *I* am not, you know."

"Neither should *I* be," said the Raft-Spider, "if I could dive, and had a house to live in under water. I should not trouble about a mere raft *then*. I should be better provided for."

"Well, well," said the Water-Spider, "we each have our several capacities. I don't think *I could* make a raft. My ancestors did, once, I daresay, but the art has been lost amongst us, long ago, and so I am dependent on your services."

"Whatever I *can* do," said the Raft-Spider again.

"Oh, I'm sure you *can*," said the Water-Spider,

"because it's only just to ferry these young friends of mine to the shore. You can do that, I know—it's so easy—for *you*—and you will because you are so good."

"I'm sure *you* are, to ask me," said the Raft-Spider. "Of course, as you know, I must be guided by the winds, and am powerless to prevent a capsize, but whatever my poor skill may be able to accomplish within those limits——"

"No one could possibly expect more," said the Water-Spider, "and it *is* so good of you. Then we'll start—that is to say my young friends will—as soon as you can put in."

"As soon as ever I *can*," said the Raft-Spider, briskly, and she began to bustle about her raft, which, as far as could be made out, was just two or three brown withered leaves, tied together with spider's web. The Water-Spider looked at Jack and Maggie, and said, in a satisfied way: "So now, my dears, you see you're provided for. Her raft is quite at your service, and all you've got to do is to get aboard."

"But we can't yet," said Jack; which was very obvious, as the raft was sailing straight away from them.

"Oh, she'll wait," said the Water-Spider, "and as for me, I shall not be hungry for the next two minutes or so. No hurry."

"But it's going away from us," said Maggie (it would be impossible to describe what she and Jack felt on hearing the above remark).

"Just now it's going away," said the Water-Spider, "but that's the wind, you know. When it leaves off blowing in the way it is, it may come back again."

"But if it goes on?" said Jack.

"Why, then the raft will," said the Water-Spider.

"We can't expect miracles, but she's doing her best, as you can see."

The Raft-Spider was certainly running about on her raft, in a very active and busy sort of way, so that Jack and Maggie could almost imagine that she was pulling ropes and setting sails (for a raft may have a sail, and here one of the brown leaves stuck up and caught the wind as if it were one), but as all this didn't make any difference, it seemed to them as if she might as well have sat still, and as the raft got farther and farther off they looked at one another with a very blank expression.

"Oh, it's *much* farther off," said Maggie, in a despairing voice.

"Never mind," said the Water-Spider. "If the wind changes and she gets here before the two minutes are up, it will be quite satisfactory, and a very creditable performance in her line."

"But if it doesn't change?" said Maggie.

"Only I advise her to be quick about it," the Water-Spider continued, as if she had not heard this question, "because they very soon will be up now."

What would have happened to Jack and Maggie if the wind had not changed there is no saying (for certain), but luckily just then it did, and back the raft came, with the Raft-Spider on it, still running about in a most excited way, and hit right against the stalk they were on, where it stuck.

"Well steered," said the Water-Spider, in a condescending manner. "Very fine seamanship, I'm sure. Now then, my dears, in with you," and Jack and Maggie were on board the raft, almost directly.

A few remarks passed between the two Spiders before the Raft-Spider pushed off, and Jack—who had got in



Jack and Maggie were on board the raft, almost directly

last, of course, and so was nearer to them—felt sure he heard the Water-Spider say, in a low tone, not *meant* to be heard: "And when did you dine last?" "Not so very long ago," the Raft-Spider answered (or at least Jack thought she did), "and it was a full meal." "Then you can refrain, I hope?" said the Water-Spider, to which the Raft-Spider replied, just as they shot out, "Well, miss, I'll do my best."

It was not a conversation calculated to make Jack feel very comfortable (though it might have been worse), but he had not much time to think about it or anything, for, directly afterwards, the Raft-Spider called out, "Be ready for capsizes," and almost as she said so, a gust of wind caught the leaves, and over the raft went, in a moment, and floated upside down.

Jack and Maggie both caught hold of the edge of the leaf, and managed to crawl out on the other side of it, where they saw the Raft-Spider running about just as she had been before, and looking as if nothing whatever had happened. "You see," she explained, "I make my raft to do as well on one side as the other, so that it doesn't matter whether it capsizes or not"—here the raft went over again and Jack and Maggie had to climb out on it again, in exactly the same way—"which is very convenient," the Raft-Spider continued, finishing her sentence as if nothing had occurred to interrupt her.

"*I* call it very inconvenient," said Maggie; "and if one were to get washed off——"

"Oh, you mustn't let that happen," said the Raft-Spider. "The proper way is just to crawl round under the leaf, you know."

"But we can't do that," said Maggie, "and if we *were* to get washed off, now that we're going so fast, we should drown—or I should, anyhow."

"I beg your pardon, I'm afraid I don't quite catch your meaning," said the Raft-Spider. "What would you do?"

"Why, drown," said Maggie. "I mean," she added, seeing that the Spider looked puzzled, "I should sink and not come up any more."

"Would you, indeed?" said the Raft-Spider. "What an odd taste, to be sure! I should run about on the top of the water, and perhaps catch a creature or two before getting on to my raft again—that is, if I had the time to spare. It wouldn't occur to me to sink—still less not to come up again."

"If we were to sink it would be because we couldn't help it, and not because we wanted to," Jack explained. "We could swim for a little, of course, but we mightn't be able to get to the bank—it's such a way—and we could never catch up to the raft, again, at the rate we're going." Indeed, the wind was sending them along, again, at a great pace, now, and having got into the middle of the river—or the lake, or pond, for they weren't quite sure which it was—where there were no more reeds, it looked like the sea to Jack and Maggie, who were not a bit bigger than the Spider.

"So I hope we sha'n't turn over any more," Jack concluded anxiously, "because drowning's not nice, you know."

"Then I wouldn't do it, if I were you," said the Raft-Spider.

"Of course we wouldn't *do* it," said Jack. "It's not a thing one *does*, you know."

"Then that's all right," said the Raft-Spider.

"But it might happen," Jack insisted, "and then of course we should be, although we didn't want to be, as I explained, Mrs Raft-Spider," he added.

The Raft-Spider looked puzzled (as she had before), and shook her head again. "Well," she said, "I suppose *my* habits are simple. *I* should prefer to run about on the water, keeping the raft in sight. Then if I saw a water-fly, or something, I could catch him and take him on board, as provisions."

"And is that how you live, Mrs Raft-Spider?" asked Jack (for he saw that she would never understand what drowning was)—"on other water-insects and——"

"Not on insects *entirely*," answered the Raft-Spider, with a look which made Jack wish he had not asked that question—it was certainly an injudicious one—"and not on *other* insects at all. Spiders are not insects, as I thought *you* knew."

"Oh no, of course not, Mrs Raft-Spider," said Jack, remembering, "I know you're not insects, but——"

"I am glad you admit it," said the Raft-Spider. "Such mistakes are unpleasant. We belong to—or rather we are—the *Arachnidæ*, and have eight legs instead of only six, which is a vast superiority."

"Not if six are enough," said Maggie. "We've only got two, you know."

"Four, I should have thought," said the Raft-Spider, "though they're very funny ones. However it doesn't matter how many less there are. Eight is the perfect number, so that even seven would be too few. Insects! Oh no. Eight legs instead of six puts one on quite another plane."

Maggie saw that it was no use to say anything more on this point, so she changed the subject. "And do you always live here on your raft, Mrs Raft-Spider?" she said, "without making a house or anything?"

"I don't know what you mean by 'anything,'" the

Raft-Spider answered, “but as for my not making a house, why, I do make one. This is my house, only it’s a house-boat, you see, which some people prefer.”

“Oh, I see,” said Maggie, “only I thought it was a raft.”

“You may call it a house-raft, if you prefer to,” said the Raft-Spider, “only as I live on it, it’s my house, all the same—though I daresay you think poorly of it, coming from Diving-Bell Hall.”

“Oh no, we don’t, Mrs Raft-Spider, really,” said Jack (he was afraid of her being offended), “only, if it didn’t keep upsetting, you know——”

“Capsizing would be a more nautical term,” said the Raft-Spider, “perhaps if you called it that, you would not mind so much.”

“Capsizing then,” said Jack, “but I don’t think it would make any difference.”

“Try the next time,” said the Raft-Spider; “there’s nothing like testing things.”

“Oh no, please don’t,” said Jack, very earnestly, and Maggie said, “Oh, please don’t, Mrs Raft-Spider,” too.

“*I* won’t, of course,” said the Raft-Spider. “As commander here, it is my duty to be careful, and I shall be, of course, though it makes variety and the vessel is constructed on that principle.”

“Oh, thank you very much, Mrs Raft-Spider,” said Jack and Maggie together.

“Not at all,” said the Raft-Spider, “one has to be careful in navigation, you know.”

Here there was a sudden puff of wind, and over the raft went again. Jack had some difficulty in getting up on the other side of the leaf and helping Maggie after him; but the Raft-Spider assisted them both, and then continued, just as if she had not had to leave off speaking,

"No capable commander would think of being otherwise."

"But it's upset again," said Jack, forgetting all about the right word, and in a very discontented voice.

"Oh, that was the wind," said the Raft-Spider carelessly; "you must admit that."

"But so it was before," said Jack, "wasn't it?"

"Why, of course," the Raft-Spider answered. "It generally is, you know. If the wind takes her, over she goes."

"I don't see much use in being careful if it makes no difference," said Maggie, whose teeth were chattering. "One might just as well do nothing at all."

The Raft-Spider looked quite pained at this remark, and said gravely, "One ought always to do what one can, you know."

"But, if one can't do anything——" said Maggie.

"Oh dear," said the Raft-Spider uneasily, "I hope you're not a fatalist. That *would* be dreadful."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Maggie, "and I'm sure I wish we *could* do something, because——"

"Always do one's best," said the Raft-Spider, "that's my motto. Be active, that's what I say. As for sitting idle and doing nothing, that wouldn't answer at all. Oh no, that would never do. On *that* plan one would just beat about before the wind, and never get anywhere."

To both Jack and Maggie it seemed as if that was just exactly what they were doing now. The wind seemed to be blowing in all directions, and the raft, or house-boat, or whatever it was, was going in all directions with it, first one way and then another. As for the Raft-Spider, she was certainly very active, and seemed to be doing a great deal, but it made no difference

whatever, and meanwhile the raft had turned over again, so that when she stopped, all of a sudden, and said, "One should never say die, you know," Maggie felt quite angry, and said, "Oh, it's all very well for you, Mrs Raft-Spider, because you *can't* drown, whatever happens, but——"

Here the Raft-Spider called out, "Look to the helm there!" (just as if there had been one) and made a rush to one end of the raft. There was a puff of wind, as she did so, that seemed to go in a circle, and sent them spinning round two or three times—it made Jack and Maggie quite giddy.

"And round we go," said the Raft-Spider, as though she had really been steering. "Nothing like self-help, you see, in this world."

"But I think it would have gone round anyhow," said Jack.

"Possibly," said the Raft-Spider, "but the principle I follow is this: assist the winds when favourable, and defy the adverse blast. More than that, of course" (here the raft went right over, again, twice running), "one can't do."

"Oh, I do wish we were out of this horrid river, or whatever it is," said Maggie, beginning to cry again. "I'm sure we never shall be."

"If there only *was* a rudder," said Jack, "and a proper sail, then perhaps——"

"And when the storm *does* come," said the Raft-Spider—"and I'm certain one's coming now—why, one must face it, to be sure. It is only in *that* way that——"

Here the storm really did come—it had been getting darker for some time—and the raft, which was only just a leaf or two, was swept, in a moment, right up

into the air, and went whirling away amongst a cloud of other leaves, mixed up with dust and small sticks. It was all Jack and Maggie could do to hold tight and keep themselves from falling off, but the Raft-Spider was just as active (and capable) now as she had been, on the water, and kept racing about and calling out all sorts of things which sounded like orders or directions, but might have been only words of encouragement to herself, such as, "Now then, steady! Avast there! Stand firm and we'll weather it!" and so on. She really seemed to understand what she was doing, and to be a capital sailor, but the more she exerted herself the faster the raft flew away with her, and there was such a roar, now, in the air, and such a wind, and especially such a dust, that Jack and Maggie felt obliged to shut their eyes, and when they opened them again, somehow it was all quite different.

CHAPTER XIX

JACK AND MAGGIE ARE PRESENTED AT COURT

EVEN before they did open their eyes it had not seemed the same, for some time, for the great noise and bluster made by the storm had been gradually growing less, and changing into something more like a hum, until, at last, why it was a hum, and quite a pleasant one, too, so that when they began to look about them, again, and saw that the dust and leaves and sticks and straws, and everything else that the wind had been whirling along with them, had become a swarm of bees, it didn't seem so very surprising after all. As for the Spider and her raft, they were gone altogether now, and they didn't seem to be on anything, but just flying along with the rest, and feeling so accustomed to it that Maggie couldn't help saying to Jack—who somehow, just then, seemed to look different to what he had before—"Why, Jack, it's as if we were bees ourselves. In fact, I don't believe we *are* ourselves any more. We're two bees, I think, doing just what other bees do, and feeling like them—at least, I suppose so—or not very differently—and able to fly just as well. That's what I think. Don't you?"

"Say beings, instead of bees," said, or rather hummed, a voice at her elbow, before Jack could answer, "and you'll be right. Two beings doing just what other beings do, part of the swarm, you know, flying along with the rest of it, in quite the same way. Not quite so high as some, perhaps, and a little bit higher than

others—not so very much difference, either way. The direction's the same, you know."

"And all in a bee-line," hummed another voice.

"With the same hive at the end of it," hummed another yet; "only, as you're only beings and not bees, it's a question if you'll be allowed to enter."

"Which only the Queen can answer," remarked a bee in the thickest part of the swarm. "Please, your Majesty"—and then the word "Majesty" was echoed and buzzed all about.

"Wait a moment," said the Queen Bee—neither Jack nor Maggie could see her, but it could only have been she. "The question is too important a one to be answered flying. In order to settle it, we must first settle, ourselves."

As the Queen made this remark, which was attended with a general hum of admiration, the whole swarm came down on the branch of an apple-tree which was all covered with beautiful pinky-white blossoms. The Queen was conducted to one of the pinkiest and prettiest, where she sat as if on a little throne, whilst all the other bees took pains only to crawl on the twigs and branches, so that they should not seem to be on a throne too. "Though, of course, we wouldn't be, really," one whispered to Maggie, "because, you see, it's the queen that makes the throne."

"Then what does it matter?" whispered Maggie in reply.

"Hush, hush!" said the Bee. "We shall be soon in the presence, where there must be no unseemly wrangling."

"I don't call that wrangling," said Maggie.

"Not yet, perhaps," the Bee answered, "but in



"Let them approach," said the Queen Bee

another eight inches it will be. Anything like brawling or high speaking in the presence——”

“But it wasn’t a bit like that,” Maggie persisted. “I only just whispered, as you did.”

“Hush!” said the Bee again. “It’s the court that gives the tone, you know, and here we are.”

All the time, Jack and Maggie were being hurried forward between a long line of bees, along the branch of the apple-tree on which the Queen had come down, and, at the words “here we are,” they found themselves amidst a very distinguished group (as another bee had whispered, for in appearance there was nothing at all to distinguish them), that stood around the throne itself. Jack and Maggie at once recognised the Queen (though they had never seen a queen bee before) not only because of the apple-blossom—her throne—on which she sat, but also because she had a longer abdomen and looked generally different from the others. A little while ago, perhaps, they would not have thought so *very* much of this difference, but now that they seemed to be turning into bees themselves (for they were not quite sure whether this was the case or not) it appeared most remarkable, and they saw, at once, that the Queen Bee was more majestic, more gracious, more royal-looking, and of nobler and courtlier bearing than any other bee in the swarm.

“Let them approach,” said the Queen Bee, in a voice that was full of charm, and then added, with great affability and a gracious inclination of her finely-formed antennæ, “They may kiss our sting if they please.”

She extended it as she spoke, with an action the winning frankness of which disguised its extreme condescension, and, to their own surprise, both Jack and

Maggie felt highly honoured by the proposal, and, instead of drawing back, frightened (as they certainly would have done if they had not been changing), knelt, one on each side, and kissed the sting with effusion. Jack even, who was rather the more *empressé* of the two, was slightly stung by it, but it only threw him into contortions of gratitude.

The bees who stood nearest looked quite ill with envy (they would have stung him in earnest, had they dared), and the news of the Queen's kind reception of the two strangers was soon buzzed about through the swarm. "She allowed them to kiss her sting," said a bee to her neighbour. "Was there ever such a high mark of favour?" "I would have flung myself forward, so as to die on it," the neighbour bee answered. "It was a great opportunity." "But *that* would have been contrary to her wishes," another bee observed, "and to die in disobedience to——" "True, true," the other answered, "but consider the extreme temptation. She would have recognised the act of devotion, and perhaps consented, at the last. Oh, happiness!" "Oh, *bliss*!" said another. Such was the type of remark that was to be heard on all sides.

"You may rise," said the Queen Bee (as she spoke there was, again, a dead silence); "and now let us turn our attention to the business in hand."

"What poetry! What royal eloquence!" murmured a bee close by, and, again to their own surprise, Jack and Maggie felt obliged to agree with her, so that they even repeated, "*Most* royal!" in tones of the greatest conviction.

"The question is," the Queen Bee continued, "whether you two, as making part of the swarm—since you have somehow managed to get mixed up with it—

should be allowed to enter the hive, with the rest of us ; or whether, as not being, properly speaking, bees, but only beings—there's a distinction, you see, because, though a bee is a being, a being need not be a bee"—there were such hums of applause at this sentence that the Queen had to stop for a little before adding, "It's as easy as A B C D," at which the applause was redoubled—"or whether" she continued, "under those, to you, painful circumstances, you should—I should rather say shouldn't—in short, whether you should *not* be."

"Please do let us, your Majesty," said Maggie, as soon as she could be heard for the buzzing and waving of wings. "I thought we had changed into bees," she added timidly, for she felt quite like one by this time ; and when she looked for Jack there was only a bee just beside her—it was all getting very funny.

In answer to this appeal the Queen Bee gave Maggie a very searching glance, and then said, suspiciously, "I hope you don't think you're another queen, because, if you were, we'd have to fight"—a remark which so terrified Maggie, especially as the other bees began to make a ring all about them, leaving her and the Queen Bee in the centre, that she wasn't able to say anything. She felt very much relieved when the Queen, after scrutinising her closely once more, said, "But no, she's quite common ; nothing queenly about *her*." At this the bees drew off again, and the Queen, settling herself in her flower-cup, said, "Our royal decision is this : you may enter the hive, but it must be on the footing of drones. *He* is one, at any rate," she added, looking at Jack, who tried—as well as Maggie—to express his feelings at this permission, but they were neither of them able to, as they were both

really bees now. All they could do was to buzz a little. It was funny, because the bees who really were—that is to say, who had always been bees—could talk quite easily, but it was all getting funnier and funnier.

However, the Queen seemed to know that they meant to say, “Thanks to your Majesty,” and so she smiled (somehow it began to seem as if *she* was turning into a person) most graciously, and then continued, in a suave, easy manner, “The privilege will, of course, carry with it the obligation of being stung to death—as drones, you see—but no other disadvantage will attend it.”

Again Jack and Maggie endeavoured to express their feelings, but unsuccessfully. They were appreciated, however, it was evident, for whilst the other bees gathered round them, to offer their congratulations, the Queen remarked, quite pleasantly, “So that little business is settled. However,” she continued, “since the spot is a pleasant one and a halt has been called, we may as well stay here a little longer. But be ready when you hear the bell.”

“The bell?” buzzed Jack and Maggie, on which the Queen, who seemed to understand them, as was perhaps, only natural, explained as follows :

“The hive,” she said, “now, by our royal command, preparing for our reception, will shortly be ready, and, by old custom, we shall enter it to the sound of a bell, which will be set ringing in our honour. As soon as it begins, then away we’ll all fly, and, once inside, there may be time, before the fulfilment of the condition alluded to, for a cursory glance at the main points of our general policy and government.”

“I should like to know all about a bee-hive,” said Maggie, in the same way as before.

"*More* than that, of course," said the Queen Bee, with a great emphasis on the "*more*," "is not to be expected in a work of the present description. The subject is too vast for anything like completeness *here*. If you want *that* you must get into something devoted to us—'Practical Bee-Keeping,' for instance, or 'The Book of the Bee,' which means *us*, of course; other kinds are merely bees."

There was another loud hum of applause at this, and then the Queen Bee went on: "We, in fact, as honey bees, occupy an exalted—I may say a proud position. We stand upon a pinnacle, so that works, as I say, are devoted to us entirely. With others it is different. There *are* bees whose place in the scale is more humble—so humble, indeed, that they are called humble bees."

Here, all at once, Maggie seemed to change into herself again (which was a most curious sensation), and saw Jack beginning to change into *himself* too. The swarm of bees seemed all gone, but the Queen was still there, and just beside her, on a little heap of moss—for the apple-tree was gone too—was a fine-looking humble bee, in a beautiful new suit of black-and-orange-striped plush—at least that was what it looked like.

"Nonsense!" said the Humble Bee, in not at all a humble voice; "no more humble than yourself, madam, and as much a queen as you are."

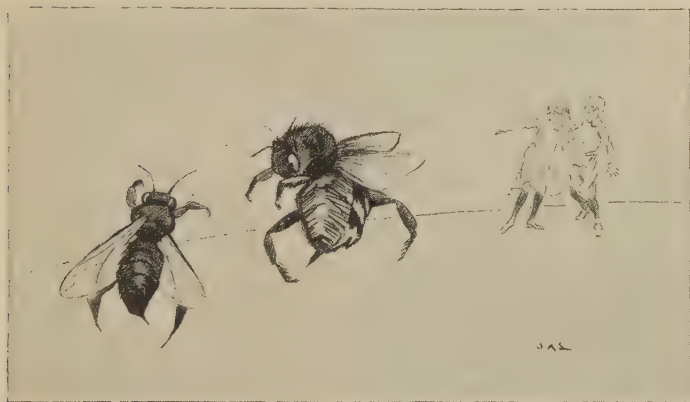
"As me, you poor creature!" said the Queen Bee, indignantly. "Why, you wear livery, and you're a humble bee."

"Not as you mean it," the Humble Bee answered, "though I'm not quarrelsome, and sometimes my good-nature is imposed upon. But that's not what it means. The allusion is to the fine, full, hurly-burly tone which I produce in flying, so different from your own paltry

buzz. As for my costume, why, I call it a rich one, and I must say that, for a queen, you're very shabbily dressed."

"Plainly," said the Queen Bee, "not shabbily; and in a manner becoming my rank. Barbaric splendour is not suited to a civilised potentate."

"As for that," the Humble Bee retorted, "I'm a great



"Oh, please don't fight," cried Maggie in alarm

deal less savage than you are. That's well known. Your tribe has been known to sting people to death, which *I* call barbarous. More than that, you even kill one another. Your males, if I am rightly informed—for it sounds incredible—are yearly slaughtered."

"That," said the Queen Bee complacently, "is the highest development of a very advanced type of civilisation. By virtue of it we stand at the apex."

"Why, it makes my blood freeze," said the Humble Bee. "Besides, your queens fight, which is most unpolished. I should be sorry to."

"Perhaps you'll be sorry that you have, in a minute or two," said the Queen Bee fiercely, and, baring her sting, she began to move towards the Humble Bee, in a very threatening manner. On her part, the Humble Bee lifted three of her legs into the air, which gave her a very odd appearance, and got her sting ready, as well.

"Oh, please don't fight," cried Maggie in alarm. "Jack, Jack, do separate them."

"I don't want to, I'm sure," said the Humble Bee, "but, of course, if I'm threatened——" (for somehow Jack had not separated them).

"Not by me," said the Queen Bee haughtily. "My subjects are gone—all except those two, who are stingless—and I should be sorry to offer personal violence to one so humble."

As this was just what the Queen Bee had done, Jack and Maggie felt rather astonished to hear her talk in that way, but they had no time to question her, as she was already retiring. As they didn't consider that they were her subjects any more, since they had changed to themselves again, they didn't follow her, and felt very glad, now, that they had escaped entering the hive (as they thought they had) and being stung to death, as drones. But just as she was spreading her wings, the Queen turned, and said: "As for *you*, you may stay and talk to her if you like, but remember, when the bell rings you'll both of you be part of my swarm again, and must do as they do. There'll be no getting out of *that*." Then she flew away.

CHAPTER XX

INTO THE BEE-HIVE AND OUT OF THE BOOK

“**N**EVER mind her,” said the Humble Bee, “we’ve had quite enough of her nonsense. Queen indeed! because she’s too proud to work, and lets her poor children do it all. It’s they that are the workers; she just sits still, and has everything done for her. I don’t call *that* being a queen. Do you?”

Of course Jack and Maggie agreed with the Humble Bee, and said that they didn’t, either. They had changed to themselves again, now, and knew what they were talking about.

“How her own children can see it in that light I’m sure I don’t know,” the Humble Bee continued. “Mine wouldn’t, I’m sure. They’d soon depose me if I were idle. It is only by working and toiling with them that I maintain my queenly pretensions.”

“Oh then you’re a queen too?” said Maggie.

“At any rate I try to behave like one,” said the Humble Bee. “Share and share alike is my maxim, and the zeal with which I act upon it may give me some right to the title.”

“But——” said Maggie.

“An idle queen,” said the Humble Bee decisively, “is, to my mind, quite an anomaly.”

“The children bees are very clever, aren’t they?” asked Jack.

“Not more so than their mothers, if you mean us,” answered the Humble Bee sharply.

“I meant the children of the Queen Bee,” Jack

explained—"as she calls herself," he added, as the Humble Bee didn't seem quite to follow him.

"I should not wish to do them an injustice," said the Humble Bee, "but I cannot conscientiously term them so."

"Oh but really, Mrs Humble Bee——" began Jack.

"Not quite so humble as that, perhaps," remarked the Humble Bee, "but I do my best, as I say, and make no pretensions whatever."

"You must call her 'Your Majesty' too," whispered Maggie. "She's a queen, as well as the other, or at least that's her idea."

Jack took the hint, of course. "Oh but your Majesty," he began again, "her children—the worker bees I think they call them—must be very clever, because they make cells and keep honey in them, and—and they make them so well, you know—their cells are quite wonderful, and—and they do a lot of other things."

"Possibly," said the Humble Bee, "possibly; I am far from wishing to run them down. Their waxwork may be equal to ours; perhaps, in some points, even superior, though they make no circular cells. But, my dears"—here she sank her voice to quite a confidential tone—"they are woefully ignorant in the all-important matter of carding."

"Carding?" said Maggie.

"Exactly," said the Humble Bee; "that, of course, is the true criterion. My dears, they can't do it. Speak to them on the subject of moss, and their minds are a positive blank."

"Moss?" said Maggie in bewilderment.

"To be sure," said the Humble Bee. "A number of unimportant things—mere filigree work, as I call it—they can do, and do well, perhaps; but they can't card."

“Oh!” said Maggie, and then added, “I suppose *you* can, your Majesty.”

“Can indeed!” was her Majesty’s answer. “Why, I’m the Carding Bee.”

“Are you?” said Maggie. “Why, I thought you were the Humble Bee.”

“Oh, I’m that too,” said the Carding Bee (for now we know her right name we must give it her). “I’m one of them, of course—I belong to the great family of *Bombus*, which has made so much noise in the world, as I dare say you know.”

“I suppose it has,” said Maggie—she thought that was better than to say that she didn’t know.

“Why, its echoes have continued to vibrate into our own times,” said the Carding Bee, as she set her wings quivering rapidly, producing a loud, noisy hum. “But though a *Bombus*, like the rest,” she continued, “*I am Bombus muscorum*, which is what none of the rest are. Oh yes, I’m the Carding Bee, and here”—pointing to the little heap of moss on which she was standing—“is my stock in trade. I should like to see honey- or any other bees card that.”

“But, perhaps,” Maggie ventured to suggest, “other bees could card something else.”

“Something else!” said the Carding Bee, looking quite bewildered, “why, whatever do you mean?”

“Something that isn’t moss, you know,” explained Jack. “That’s what she means.”

“It’s my belief,” said the Carding Bee, after pondering a little, “that you neither of you know what carding is. Something else, indeed! Without moss there can be no carding. That’s my experience, and as I’m the Carding Bee, I must know.”

“Yes, but for all that——” Jack was beginning.

"Oh, don't tell me," said the Carding Bee. "When you ask me if a bee's clever, then I ask *you*, can she card? And what I mean when I say that, is, can she card moss? If she can't, then I know what to think. Moss, as we Carding Bees sometimes say to each other—it's a sort of proverb amongst us—moss is the measure of all things."

"But surely a bee can be clever in other ways besides carding," said Maggie.

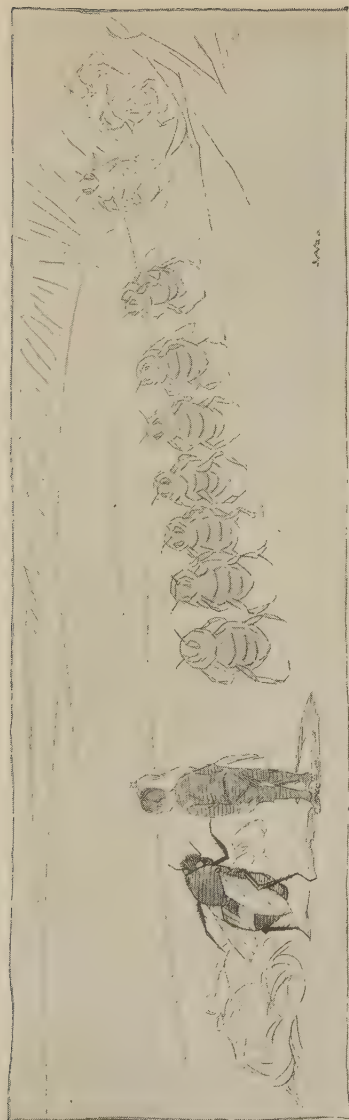
"Perhaps you don't know how *very* clever carding is," was the Carding Bee's answer. "The best way would be to show you. After that we can proceed with our argument."

Whilst she was saying this, Jack and Maggie began to notice that several other bees, just like the one they were talking to, except that, perhaps, they were a little smaller, were crawling up the little moss-hill.

They clustered round the Queen Carding Bee, who received them with evident emotion, and then said, "Form in line, dears," in a tone of parental authority. Instantly all the new-comers placed themselves one behind another, so that, all together, they made a line from the moss-hill to a hedgerow bank that stood near it. In one part of the face of this bank there was a little depression which looked just the place for a nest, and here there were quite a number of Carding Bees waiting to make themselves useful.

"But why are they all standing backwards?" said Maggie; for every one of the line of bees had its head turned away from the bank.

"You'll soon see that," said the Queen Carding Bee. "Now observe. I am about to commence the great work." With this she seized a little piece of the moss she was standing on, in her mandibles, and, with these and



“Form in line, dears,” said the Queen Carding Bee

her first pair of legs, gradually disentangled and pulled it away from the rest. "There, that's carding," she said, as she passed the morsel under her body, to her second pair of legs, and from them to the third. By these it was pushed clear of her body, when, instantly, the bee behind her, who was ready waiting, took it between *her* front legs, and passed it under *her* body, to the next bee, who passed it on to the fourth, and so it went all down the line, till it came, at last, to the bees in the little hollow, who at once began to push it and work it.

"Oh, how wonderful!" cried Maggie, and Jack was beginning with, "Well, I *do* call that——"

"No time for talking yet awhile," said the Carding Bee, as she seized on another piece of moss. "Card first, talk afterwards, that's what we Carding Bees say." And down the line the bit of moss went, and was followed by a third and a fourth bit, and ever so many more—it seemed to get quicker and quicker—till—who would ever have thought it?—the little tuft or cushion of moss was quite gone, leaving no more to pass or to stand upon.

"There!" said the Carding Bee again, "that's carding, and the test of intelligence. Without it a bee may be honest and well-meaning—a creditable member of society, in short—but, judged from a purely intellectual standpoint, she must be pronounced wanting."

"I don't quite see that," began Jack.

"Naturally not," said the Carding Bee. "It takes a Carding Bee *to* see it. Do you think the rest would agree with me? By no means; their intelligence is not sufficiently expanded."

"But what do you do with the moss after it has gone down the line?" asked Maggie (she felt much more

interested in that, and, besides, she knew it was of no use to try and persuade one insect that it was not superior to another).

"Why, we make our nest of it, of course," the Carding Bee answered. "That's what we're doing now. You've only to look; it's a fine domed structure with a long tunnel leading to it—all of moss, and there's enough for us to walk about on, too. Of all carpets a mossy one is, in my opinion, the most elegant."

"Except a rosebush-leaf," said a voice in the air, and a bee much smaller than the one they were talking to, but which seemed to be a humble bee too—at least, it was more like one than a honey bee—all at once buzzed by them, with something green in its mouth. "A rosebush-leaf, I say, if one really wants elegance. Anything else is common by comparison."

"Never mind her," said the Carding Bee nervously. "She hasn't a carpet at all, really. She makes no nest, but only a cradle."

"*A cradle!*" exclaimed the newly-come Bee—or else it was another one, for several more of the same kind were now buzzing about—"why, I make half-a-dozen, and more, sometimes, all in a line, and if that's not a nest I'm sure I don't know what is. What's your nest for, then, if it comes to that, except for the young to grow up in? Only yours have only got wax cradles, which *I* call plebeian!"

"Plebeian!" cried the Carding Bee indignantly. "Why you must be thinking of tallow. If I used that, indeed——"

"Comparatively I mean, of course," said the new Bee. "To be cradled in a rosebush-leaf is far more aristocratic."

"Never mind her," repeated the Carding Bee, "but

come and see our nest in the bank there. The dome is not yet completed—it's so lofty, you know—and if you come quickly you'll see it in course of construction."

But as they began to walk towards the bank, somehow it seemed to get farther off—it had been as near as could be—whilst the air became fuller and fuller of the new little Bees carrying pieces of leaves, till, at last, when they did get there, somehow it wasn't a bank, but a tree, and neither the Queen Carding Bee nor any of the other ones were there.

"So you'll have to put up with us," said one of the little Bees, as it dashed, with its burden, on to the trunk of the tree, just at the mouth of a little round hole, like a tunnel, that seemed to have been bored in it with a gimlet. "But never mind, you won't lose so very much by exchanging a carding bee for a leaf-cutting bee. Will they, comrades?"

This was addressed to all the other little bees round about, and instantly the air was full of shrill little buzzings, which sounded just like shrill laughter.

"And are you the Leaf-cutting Bee?" asked Maggie, though of course she knew now.

"Certainly I am," said the little Bee, briskly. "*Megachile acuta*—nothing less, I assure you."

"And aren't you a humble bee, too?" inquired Jack.

"Not that I am aware of," answered the Leaf-cutting Bee—and again the air seemed full of little titterings—"rather too active and sprightly for poor old *Bombus*, I should say."

"You look rather like a small one, anyhow," said Jack.

"I should *feel* rather small, if I did," said the Leaf-

cutting Bee, "but half-an-inch across the spread wings leaves nothing to be desired." She was silent for a little after this, and then said, rather sulkily, "If the conversation is to continue, it must be conducted upon more serious lines."

"What a pretty little piece of leaf that is that you're carrying," said Maggie. "It's as round as if it had been made with a pair of compasses."

The little Bee looked very pleased at this, and was lively again in a moment. "It is indeed a most delicate piece of manipulation," she said, "and if you ask what it's for, why, I'll tell you."

"What is it for, then?" asked Jack.

"Why, to close up the orifice of my first cradle, to be sure," the Leaf-cutting Bee answered. "Here it is, in this little tunnel, which I bored, myself, and lined with other pieces of rosebush-leaf of a different shape, to suit the dimensions. Then I filled it with pollen and honey, to serve as food for my infant whilst she should be in the cradle, and having laid my egg in the midst of the delicious concoction, all I have to do now is to seal it up. Allow me. So! I use no adhesive of any sort, but trust entirely to the nicety of the adjustment." And, indeed, the little thin, round wafer of leaf fitted so perfectly into the circular hole, that there seemed no more fear of its falling out than if it had been a cork in its bottle. "That's number six," said the Leaf-cutting Bee, when she had finished (and it did not take her long). "I shall add a seventh, and perhaps the best thing you can do now is to see me cut the leaves for it."

"Better see me cut my poppy petals," said another little bee that flew by, all of a sudden, with a flake of crimson, instead of something green, in its jaws,

and then all the little pieces of green leaf that the leaf-cutting bees had been carrying seemed to turn into red ones, whilst the bees that were flying with them didn't look quite the same kind as they had been.

"Aren't you the Leaf-cutting Bee any more, then?" said Maggie—for even the Bee that she seemed to have been talking to had now a red leaf instead of a green one, and was changed like the other bees.

"Any more indeed!" said this new or changed arrival, in an injured voice. "I am, and always have been, the Tapestry Bee."

"Are you really, your Majesty?" said Maggie—for this announcement had been made very proudly.

"If you want to be ceremonious you should say, 'Your Imperial Highness,'" said the Tapestry Bee, "because, you know, I'm an empress."

"Are you really, your Imp——" Maggie was begging.

"Oh, never mind all that," said the Tapestry Bee, "we'll excuse it. On proper occasions we can be familiar and chatty. But I am an empress, all the same, having been born in the purple, as my children will also be."

"In the purple?" said Maggie; not knowing quite what the Tapestry Bee meant.

"Why, did you ever see a finer purple than this?" asked the Tapestry Bee, holding up its little strip of poppy petal, which was certainly of a very fine colour, but not what Maggie had been accustomed to think of as purple.

"Is that purple?" she said.

"I call it red," said Jack; "crimson, you know."

"Precisely—a rich crimson," said the Tapestry Bee.

"Well, it may surprise you to learn that that *is* purple."

"But surely——" Jack was beginning.

"Oh, we needn't argue it," said the Tapestry Bee, "because, of course, as an empress, I know. This, as I say, is the purple, and it is with this purple tapestry that I hang the chamber in which my eggs are deposited. That, of course, makes it the Purple Chamber, and as we tapestry bees are all born there, we are born in the purple, which makes us all emperors and empresses. There's no getting out of that, is there?"

"I suppose not," said Maggie, "but——"

"Of course there isn't," said the Tapestry Bee. "I'm an empress because I was born in the purple, and a good judge of purple because I'm an empress. That's clear, I suppose?"

Jack and Maggie had to suppose so too, for they couldn't see any flaw in the argument. Besides, Maggie began to remember, now, that she had read somewhere in her ancient history books that the purple robe of the Roman emperors was not what we would call purple, but more a kind of crimson or scarlet. So it was evident that the Tapestry Bee had read ancient history too, and knew quite well what she was talking about—a fact which impressed Maggie very much.

"Bees *are* wonderful insects," she said reflectively, "the most wonderful there are, I suppose."

"Except ants!" said Jack, who had read that they were the cleverest. "Ants beat them, you know."

"Ants indeed!" said the Tapestry Bee, and then somehow, all at once, she turned into an ant herself, and went on quite quietly, "Ants, indeed, represent the very crown and summit of insect intelligence. Our habits and institutions are a source of ever-increasing wonder to the reflective mind."

"Are they really?" said Maggie.

"I should just think they were," said the Ant, in a tone of the deepest conviction. "Why, we make slaves and keep our own cows, to milk. What do you think of that?"

Maggie didn't at all know what to think of it, and even Jack, who had not got quite so far as this in entomology, was astonished. "Slaves and cows!" he exclaimed.

"Certainly," the Ant answered; "and we have our cemeteries, too. We store our grain, and should it be threatened with damp in the granary, we bring it out to dry in the sun—also we are accomplished mushroom-growers. Other industries, both pastoral and agricultural, flourish amongst us, whilst flower- and arboriculture are represented in varying degrees. Though hospitality is practised, yet most of our guests are paying ones, so that the letting of lodgings for emolument may be said to be part of our social economy. If we turn to the arts and applied sciences, architecture has been carried by us to such a pitch of perfection that we are accustomed to throw up covered ways, as we walk, in order to protect ourselves from the heat of the sun; and we even use our own cocoons as shuttles, to facilitate weaving. As hunters we have no equals. Political combinations and fusions, in which specific distinctions are forgotten for the common good, exist side by side with the arts of militarism, the whole being governed by strict logical sequence and the general necessities of cause and effect. Such is the position and standing of the creatures I have the honour to represent."

This speech of the Ant's quite took Jack's breath away, and, as for Maggie, she began to think she had got out of a book of entomology into one of her own histories. It was just like the summing-up of some

period or state of the times, and there were even more words in it which were difficult to understand.

"I tell you what it is," said Jack at last, "if ants are like that I should like to know everything about them."

"You can't do that here," said the Ant. "The mere fringe of the subject is all that can be entered upon in a work of popular natural history."

"Why, that's what the Queen Bee said," remarked Maggie, "so I suppose that ants and bees really are the two cleverest insects. Of course I mean the honey bee," she continued, "because, on the whole, for all the other ones may say, she really is——"

"Distinctly inferior to the honey-pot ant," said the Ant, finishing the sentence for her. "Talk of the honey bee! why, she stores honey in mere cells made of wax, but we make ourselves into honey-pots, and feed our companions when they require such assistance. A real live honey-pot is better than a mere cell with honey in it, I suppose, and, being perfectly round, it holds more in proportion to its size—that is to say, we do."

"Do you really mean to say——" began Jack.

"Ah, you should see us hanging in rows from the ceiling," the Ant continued—and somehow, as she went on speaking, she seemed to get rounder and rounder—"waiting to pour out our own honey, when wanted, which is what no ordinary honey-pot, or jar either, ever thinks of doing—that, at least, is my impression."

"It *must* be nonsense," said Maggie to herself, "though she really does look more like a pot, or something with something in it, than an ant, or any kind of insect. Oh, Jack, do just look at her!"

In fact what had, at first, seemed the body, or rather abdomen, of the Ant, was, by this time, as round as a marble, and so large that all the rest of her only looked like a little neck or spout. It was in quite the right place, too, for the mouth of any vessel to be in—at the top, that is to say—so that the Ant's legs—if she really was an ant—were right up in the air, now, and she stood, or at least rested, on the honey-pot part of her.

"Would you like some?" she said, all at once, to Maggie, as she gave a little roll towards her, so that her head was just on a level with hers, "because, if you would, I'll pour out."

"Whatever do you mean?" said Maggie, not feeling at all comfortable.

"It's the only way, you know," said the Honey-pot Ant (for that was evidently her name), as she opened her mouth. "So, if you do want any——"

"I don't," said Maggie, very decidedly, "and I do wish you'd go away."

"Perhaps you'd prefer a game of honey-pots," said the Honey-pot Ant. "Ants do play, you know."

"I don't want to play," said Maggie, "and I wish you'd go away."

"It's rather difficult to walk, with a figure like this," said the Honey-pot Ant, "and I can't fly, you know."

"I wish you could," said Maggie—for she felt that the Ant was becoming disagreeable. "That's something that a bee can do and an ant can't, anyhow," she added. "Ants can't fly."

"They can when it's necessary," the Honey-pot Ant answered. "There are flying ants, you know."

"Why, of course there are, Maggie," said Jack, "and here they come too," he added hastily, for, all at once, the air was full of them—they were in both their faces,

and in Maggie's hair, and, in fact, everywhere, so that there was no seeing anything.

“What shall we do?” cried Maggie. “It's like being inside a cloud. We'd better run, I think.”

“Never mind,” said Jack, “they can't hurt us. They don't sting, you know—it's not as if they were bees.”

“Bees!” said Maggie, and somehow, as she looked again, the graceful flying things, so pretty and delicate, began to get larger and darker, and their wings, now, were not so long and slender, and did not gleam, sometimes like silver, and then with all the colours of the rainbow. They began to hum, too, which they had not done before—softly, at first, and then louder and louder, and then, above all the humming, there came the sound of a bell.

“It's the swarm, it's the swarm,” cried Maggie, and, the next moment, both she and Jack were whirling away in the midst of it, towards a great yellow object which was getting nearer and nearer. “Oh, Jack,” she cried, in an agony, “it's the hive, and we'll have to go into it, and then——”

And then they were in it; but somehow the combs, as they touched them, turned into paper, and began to tear, and then it seemed as if the black things upon them, which, at first, had looked like bees, were now only printed letters, making words and sentences, whilst what had seemed the thatchwork of the hive was not like straw when they came to it—for they had soon gone right through the paper, and got to the top—but more like a thick piece of cardboard with yellow cloth over it, much harder than paper, and, of course, not nearly so easy to tear.

“Go on, push hard, Maggie!” cried Jack, as he pushed and tore and panted, himself. “I know what it is now—

it isn't the hive, it's the cover. *Pull* now! Tear it off! It's the cover, I tell you. We've been through the book, and we're coming out at the other end of it. But we'll have to work hard, though. Do pull!"

Maggie did pull, and with all her might, for Jack's explanation, she thought, might very well be the correct one, and, even if it wasn't, she didn't want to be stung. Jack pulled too, of course—harder if anything—both of them pulled and tugged together as hard as ever they could, and, before very long, their efforts were rewarded—as genuine effort always is. There was a crack, a sharp, rending sound, something seemed to open, and the next thing they saw was the table they had been sitting at, and then the opposite wall of the room.

"Come, wake up, both of you!" said a voice, which, at first, sounded something like the Queen Bee's, but soon changed into one much more familiar—in fact their mother's. "It's your bed-time and past, and the bell's gone in the nursery. *Why* you should prefer falling asleep in your chairs to saying that—— Oh, Jack, the book that I gave you!"

Explanations followed, of course, but they were not completed that night. In fact it took a long time for their mother to understand why, in this instance, it was not quite so dreadful that a new book, which was also a birthday present, should have had its leaves torn and one of its covers pulled off, the very next day, as in most other cases it would have been—and she never did *quite* understand that, to become a real entomologist, it was well worth while spoiling a book.

Jack, however, as he grew older, understood it better and better, and Maggie, though she went on preferring history, and some other things, to entomology or

natural history in general, was yet quite able to agree with him—which is saying a very great deal. From that time, and all through his life, Jack hardly ever killed an insect—only in quite exceptional cases, and never to make a collection. Instead of that, he used to watch what they did, and he soon found that to watch one interesting one, alive, was better than to see hundreds and hundreds of them, dead. It was the habits of insects, now, that he was interested in, and it was quite true, he found, what the Great Morpho Butterfly had once told him, that when they were dead they had no habits.



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